

WORLD/A18

Bush decided to invade Iraq before diplomacy failed, says report

'Sari-sari' store by day, condom outlet by night



By Alex Pal
PDI Visayas Bureau
DAUIN, NEGROS ORIENTAL—In the daytime, Emma Dinigido's *sari-sari* store sells candies, cigarettes, soap and sachets of shampoo. At

SARI-SARI/A9

SPORTS/A21

Unheralded GMU stuns Connecticut, enters NCAA Final 4

email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph

**NEWS/A2**

DOJ wants trial of 4 US Marines moved to Manila

ENTERTAINMENT/A2-I

'Pepot Artista,' 2 other RP films, competing in Singapore filmfest



PHILIPPINE DAILY
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BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

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HOST/A8

9 killed in Sulu explosion

Ramos supports signature campaign

By Christine O. Avendaño and Jerome Aning

THE ADMINISTRATION YES-
TERDAY found an ally in former
President Fidel Ramos in its
campaign to collect 5 million
signatures and push through
with its plan to rewrite the
Constitution over vehement opposition
objections.

Ramos threw his support behind the signature campaign and said that, while the Supreme Court could better deal with the legal questions, "there is a higher court and that's the people themselves."

Chair Benjamin Abalos Sr. of the controversy-hounded Commission on Elections, some of whose officials have been linked to alleged vote-rigging to help President Macapagal-Arroyo's win in the 2004 polls, indicated yesterday his office was prepared to begin verifying the millions of signatures that administration backers said they had already collected.

Abalos made the statement after two senior officials in the Comelec's central office in Manila separately confirmed to reporters that groups identified with the Cha-cha (Charter change) movement had approached some election officers in provinces and towns and offered them money

RAMOS/A8



WEARING a mask and wielding a scythe, Crisostomo Cruz dramatizes a Lenten protest outside the Department of Justice to demand justice for victims of last month's stampede during the "Wowowee" game show anniversary celebration.

20 others hurt; armed suspect held

By Ed General
PDI Mindanao Bureau
and Luige A. del Puerto
in Manila

JOLO, SULU—THE BLAST ripped through the Sulu Consumers Cooperative store shortly after the lunch break at 1:15 p.m. yesterday.

People rushed out of the grocery and dry goods store and, moments later, when the smoke cleared nine people lay dead—mostly store employees. More than 20 others were injured, including a year-old boy who lost an eye, according to the local Red Cross.

The injured, some in critical condition, were rushed to the Sulu General Hospital.

Senior Supt. Ahirum Ajirim, provincial police director, said a young man had been arrested in connection with the bombing, but no details were disclosed. Police in Manila said the man had a .45-cal. pistol, an Icom radio and a remote control device.

Ajirim said the blast was so powerful it tore down the walls of the town's biggest store. "Half of the establishment is destroyed," he said.

The device was believed to have been planted in the baggage counter.

A 30-year-old woman, who identified herself only as Amina, said she dove under a parked tricycle when she heard the explosion.

"I did not know how I was able to do that. All I was thinking of was to stay

9 KILLED/A6

ABS-CBN opens settlement talks with victims

By Armand N. Nocum and Margaux C. Ortiz

LAWYERS FOR ABS-CBN YESTERDAY said the television network had initiated talks with 900 victims, including relatives of the 71 dead, to settle civil liabilities arising from the stampede last month during the first anniversary of its popular game show "Wowowee."

An NBI official, Ferdinand Lavin, said the criminal case against 12 ABS-CBN officials

and five others in connection with the tragedy at the PhilSport Arena in Pasig City on Feb. 4 could be dismissed if the victims agreed to an amicable settlement.

In moves showing that ABS-CBN is covering all flanks, its lawyers asked the Court of Appeals to issue a restraining order against the Department of Justice, accusing the DOJ of engaging in "institutional bias" in a "mad rush" to pin the blame on the TV giant.

During the second preliminary hearing

on the criminal charges filed against the 17 respondents, the lawyers said talks with the victims and their relatives had begun on Thursday.

"Our clients have repeatedly said they are willing to settle all the claims and give justice to all concerned," said ABS-CBN lead counsel Regis Puno, a former justice undersecretary.

Puno later told reporters that the lawyers were set to talk on April 4 with Dante

ABS-CBN/A4

GMA nears record of most ex-AFP appointees

Bunye: She's wielding power judiciously

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO yesterday stood pat on the choices she made for key government positions in the last five years amid criticisms that many of her appointees were less than qualified for their positions.

But former Social Welfare Secretary Corazon "Dinky" Soliman said the power of Ms Arroyo to appoint government officials should be limited to stop her from using the bureaucracy to pay her political debts.

Soliman said the President was exercising her power to appoint officials even to low-ranking positions to reward supporters.

"I know this for a fact because I was given an assistant secretary to accommodate people who she believes must be accommodated. It is definitely to repay political debts," she said, recalling her stint at the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

Contrary to charges that Ms Arroyo had abused her prerogative to appoint government officials, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said the President was wielding her power "judiciously."

"President Arroyo has sought to appoint men and women of integrity, drive and competence to government posts and this is validated by our strong gains in good governance, political stability and economic growth," Bunye said in a statement.

Bunye was reacting to yesterday's

By Jerry E. Esplanada
(Second of three parts)

DURING HER FIRST TWO YEARS IN office alone, President Macapagal-Arroyo had already appointed more than 50 retired military officers to various civilian posts.

Today, Ms Arroyo is close to breaking the record set by the Ramos administration (1992-98), which was responsible

SPECIAL REPORT

During President Corazon Aquino's term, more than 20 officers joined the civilian bureaucracy.

Nearly 30 ex-military officials did the same during the short-lived Estrada administration.

Among the current administration's latest recruits are Benjamin Defensor, former Armed Forces of the Philippines chief of staff, who was named antiterrorism czar, and Jose Calimlim, former AFP vice chief of staff, who was designated chief of the Subic Bay Freeport's antimuggling task force.

Other ex-AFP chiefs of staff like Diomedio Villanueva, Roy Cimatu, Dionisio Santiago, Narciso Abaya and

GMA NEARS/A6



TROUBLE BEFORE TAKEOFF

Officials inspect the damage after the gypsum board ceiling at the arrival area of the controversial Ninoy Aquino International Airport's Terminal 3 collapsed. The facility was scheduled for a "soft opening" on Friday. (Story on Page A2.)

After 186 years, woman leads PMMA cadets

By Allan Macatuno
PDI Central Luzon Desk

SAN NARCISO, ZAMBALES—WOMAN ON top.

For the first time in its 186-year history, the male-dominated Philippine Merchant Marine Academy (PMMA) based here has a woman cadet for its top graduate.

Cadet First Class Zulaika Mariano Calibjo, 23, will lead more than 180 graduates in June, as the first woman to top the graduating class of one of Asia's oldest maritime institutions.

"Being the first woman cadet who will

AFTER/A7

BUNYE/A6

After 186 years, woman leads PMMA cadets

FORECAST: Northern Luzon will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers. Southern Mindanao will have mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and isolated thunderstorms. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to at times cloudy skies with isolated brief rainshowers or thunderstorms.

COMPILED BY KATE PEDROSO, PDI RESEARCH/03/27/06

SOURCE PAGASA

Text us your feedback: inquirer news name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Hilago/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Bugue	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Debu	Partly Cloudy
Laog	Partly Cloudy	Tebahan	Partly Cloudy
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zambanga	Partly Cloudy
Lagap	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Partly Cloudy
Catapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

Naia 3 ceiling collapses, stops Friday test flights

By Nikko Dizon

THE CEILING HAS CAVED IN, literally, on the Ninoy Aquino International Airport's brand new Terminal 3 even before the concourse could see off its first passengers.

Yesterday, the gypsum board ceiling at the arrival area of the mothballed terminal collapsed, prompting yet again another delay in the airport's opening, albeit a "soft" one, which had been scheduled for March 31.

"As of now, we are calling off any trial runs scheduled at the end of the month until such time

that we are fully assured of the safety not only of the area affected by the collapse but of the entire terminal," said Alfonso Cusi, Manila International Airport Authority (Miaa) general manager, in a statement.

But even before the collapse, Malacañang had decided to postpone the formal opening of the terminal for up to another nine months due to the government's failure to settle the compensation issue with the developers of the facility.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye, in a statement issued shortly be-

fore the ceiling collapsed, said: "The government assures the people, especially our OFWs (overseas Filipino workers) that Naia Terminal 3 will be open within this year to service their needs."

The Supreme Court had denied "with finality" the second motion filed by the government seeking reconsideration of a lower court ruling ordering it to pay the developer of the airport terminal, the Philippine International Air Terminals Co. (Piatco) consortium, P3 billion in compensation.

The government has said it will pay the amount but only af-

ter the cases filed by the German member of the consortium, Fraport AG, and Piatco before international courts had been settled.

Oscar Paras, Miaa senior assistant general manager, said two Cebu Pacific flights to Hong Kong and back were supposed to have flown out of Naia 3 on March 31 in a test run.

"We were meeting with Cebu Pacific when we got the report that the ceiling collapsed," Paras told reporters at the accident site.

Paras said the incident happened at around 9 a.m., but Cusi's statement indicated it oc-

curred about an hour later.

An area of 80 to 100 square meters of the ceiling and several steel beams collapsed at the Northwest arrival area of the terminal.

The gaping cavity exposed the air conditioning ducts, lighting fixtures and more twisted beams.

No one was reported hurt.

"We have asked Takenaka to explain the circumstances behind the collapse. We are also conducting our own independent investigation of the incident," Cusi said.

Takenaka Corp. is the Japanese construction company

that built the airport facility for its original owner Piatco.

Paras said Miaa's own consultants for the airport terminal had heard "vibrating sounds during [an earlier] inspection of the terminal at the area where the ceiling collapsed" when the air conditioning system was turned on.

Paras said lawyers from the Office of the Solicitor General were set to visit the accident site yesterday afternoon to assess the damage.

"It's up to them to find out what defenses they can raise because of the incident," Paras said.

With Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

Cops told to lay off STL project

Napolcom issues guidelines for police

By Tarra V. Quismundo

IN A BALANCING ACT, the National Police Commission (Napolcom) has laid down guidelines for lawmen to follow to ensure the lawful operation of the Small Town Lottery (STL) at the same time that they continue to pursue the nationwide campaign against illegal gambling.

In the wake of Sunday's raids on STL outlets in Quezon City, the Napolcom yesterday issued Resolution 2006-116 "clarifying the role" of the Philippine National Police in STL operations and setting clear-cut rules for making arrests during the legal lottery's expected full-blown implementation.

The number one guideline: "The PNP will not arrest anybody engaged in any activity within the scope of the STL project of the PCSO."

Arrests may only be made after the verification of complaints against unauthorized STL operations from the PCSO or any of its agents, mayors, religious groups or nongovernment organizations.

The police may also take into custody persons found to be violating the anti-illegal gambling law, as they had long been mandated to do.

"The basic problem is our police officers have been instructed to conduct an all-out anti-illegal gambling campaign... This has caused a problem because when we implement this policy, we need to be certain the activity that is going on is legal," said Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno, who is also the Napolcom chair.

"Now in the past weeks, since the coming in of STL, some of our police officers [have been] a little confused... The PCSO will have to tell us who are involved in their activity and who are not," Puno said.

A project of the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO), the STL was conceived as an

Hagedorn still in, Malacañang clarifies

ANTI-JUETENG CZAR MAYOR Edward Hagedorn of Puerto Princesa is after all, the government's top man in its campaign to "and kill" jueteng, the illegal numbers game, through Small Town Lottery (STL). This clarification was made yesterday by Presidential Chief of Staff Michael Defensor, who earlier said that Hagedorn was not involved in the STL program.

Defensor said that initially the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO) had been tasked with implementing STL.

"But we requested him (Hagedorn) to continue to implement anti-jueteng operations, in particular, the STL as a parallel (effort) to compete with and kill jueteng," Defensor said in a phone interview.

After all, Defensor said that Hagedorn, was the "one who conceptualized the anti-jueteng campaign."

Christine O. Avenaño

antidote to "jueteng," the illegal numbers game the government has long been trying to eradicate.

The Department of Interior and Local Government had earlier asked the PCSO to defer the STL until its legality had been clarified, but this was denied because the PCSO had "contractual obligations" and had secured a favorable legal opinion from the government corporate counsel, Puno said.

Hence, Puno said, the Napolcom decided to issue the guidelines for the PNP in the latter's capacity as the enforcer of laws. At the same time, he clarified that the DILG and Napolcom had nothing to do with "the administration, origination and management of STL."

"We are telling the PCSO that it is principally their obligation to let us know when an illegal act is being committed, because now there is this very difficult to understand gray area and an exercise that looks like jueteng when in fact it is a test drive for the STL," Puno said.

He said the PCSO had submitted its initial list of authorized operators, as well as the illegitimate ones, but added that the agency must continue to provide the PNP with fresh information on the extent of STL operations.



FROM THE INSIDE LOOKING OUT

President Macapagal-Arroyo walks past the ground floor gallery of the Kalayaan Hall after her regular roundtable meeting in Malacañang Monday.

SUBIC RAPE CASE

DOJ wants trial of 4 US Marines moved from Olongapo to Manila

By Armand N. Nocum and Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk

THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE wants the trial of four US Marines accused of raping a 22-year-old Filipino woman in Subic transferred from Olongapo City to Manila following the withdrawal of an Olongapo City judge from the case.

In a memorandum-request to Supreme Court Chief Justice Artemio Panganiban, Gonzalez said he deemed the transfer necessary because the two judges left in Olongapo could not take the case for various reasons.

Dilag's son was an associate of the law firm defending one of the

The complainant also plans to petition the high court today for a transfer, but this time to Quezon City.

In asking for the change of venue, the woman's lead private lawyer, Evalyn Ursua, argued that all three remaining judges in Olongapo City were "not qualified."

A new judge was needed after Judge Renato Dilag opted to be taken out of the case last Friday immediately after the woman's lawyer filed a petition seeking his inhibition due to conflict of interest.

The woman's lawyer also pointed out that one of the three remaining judges, Judge

servicemen, Staff Sgt. Chad Brian Carpenter.

The lawyer said Executive Judge Avelino Lazo was set to retire in December, a fact also cited by Gonzalez in his memo.

Considering that the Visiting Forces Agreement provides that the judicial proceedings have to be completed in a period of one year, it would be dangerous to start the trial of this case and later, suspend it in the middle of the trial with the retirement of Judge Lazo," Gonzalez told Panganiban.

The woman's lawyer also pointed out that one of the three remaining judges, Judge

Eliodoro Ubiadas, had been suspended.

She also said that Judge Ramon Caguioa had a relative lawyer working for the Sycip law firm, which is defending Lance Cpl. Keith Silkwood, another accused.

The other Marines charged with rape were US Marines L/Cpls. Daniel Smith and Dominic Duplantis.

Gonzalez disclosed that he personally handed his memo to Panganiban in a meeting of the Judicial and Bar Council yesterday.

He said Panganiban assured him that the magistrates would give priority to the petition and take it up in today's en banc session.

12 police commandos cleared of coup rap

By Luig A. del Puerto

THE POLICE YESTERDAY CLEARED a dozen officers of any involvement in last month's attempt to unseat President Macapagal-Arroyo.

The twelve were apart from the four officers of the elite Special Action Force who were implicated in the attempted coup on Feb. 24.

"They were invited to shed light on reports that they were being recruited (for destabilization). We verified. They were cleared," said Director Marcelo Ele, chief of the Directorate for Investigation and Detective Management.

The SAF is the most skilled combat group under the Philippine National Police.

Last week, the DIDM formal-

ly charged the group's former chief with "misconduct." Three of his subordinates were charged with "grave misconduct."

The four were Chief Supt. Marcelino Franco Jr. (ret.), Senior Supt. Benjamin Magalang, Chief Insp. Eric Dilag and Insp. Ryan Paloma.

Franco was SAF chief until he was relieved following the discovery of his plan to withdraw support from President Arroyo on Feb. 24. He retired from the service on March 8 on reaching the mandatory retirement age of 56. His retirement does not preclude the filing of charges against him.

The 12 officers cleared included colonels, majors and captains. None were from the SAF while a

few were from a police support unit based in Camp Crame, Ele said.

"The reports we received said they were being recruited (for destabilization)," said Ele. "They said they were not being recruited. We verified this and cleared them."

Last week, the DIDM transmitted the precharge documents against the four SAF officers to Chief Supt. Ireneo Manalo, who was assigned by PNP Director General Arturo Lomibao to hear the cases against them.

Manalo, a member of Philippine Military Academy Class '77, is executive officer of the Directorate for Police Community Relations.

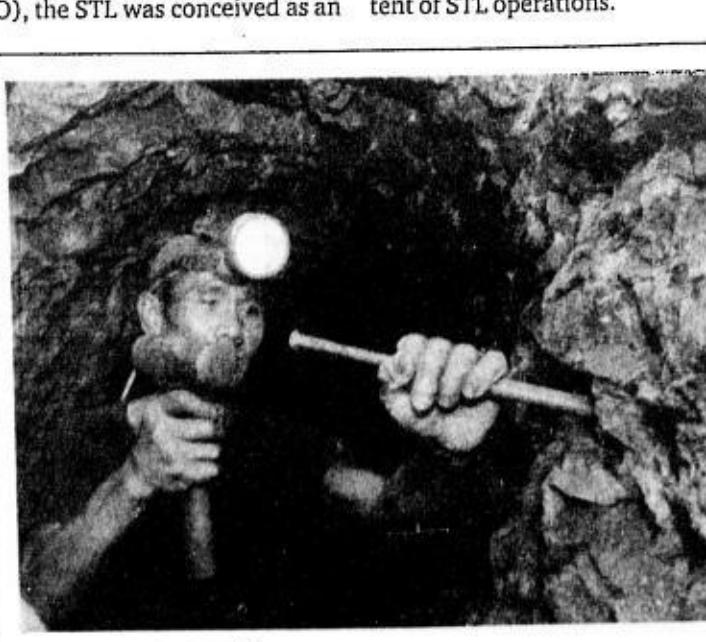
"He is an officer known for his good service reputation," Ele said.

Franco, Magalang, Dilag and Paloma have been under "restrictive custody" since late February, when Malacañang said it faced a leftist-rightist conspiracy aimed at ousting Ms Arroyo.

This means they cannot leave the camp without escorts.

Ele, however, had earlier admitted the police's case against the four officers was "a little weak."

"We have found probable cause, based on reports, on the preponderance of reports (of their involvement)," Ele had said. "But we have no sworn statements (against them). The case is a little weak."



MINERS' SAFETY

A worker hammers gold ore inside a mine in Itogon, Benguet, Sunday. The government was urged yesterday to improve safety measures for 126,000 miners working for local and foreign mining firms in the country.

AFP

Cop exec sues Ping for libel

By Luige A. del Puerto
and Philip C. Tubeza

THE POLICE OFFICIAL ACCUSED of manufacturing the passport of former Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano has filed a P2-million libel case against his accuser, Sen. Panfilo Lacson.

Senior Supt. Asher Dolina,

chief of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group-National Capital Region, filed the case in the Mandaluyong City Prosecutor's Office yesterday afternoon.

Dolina said Lacson's accusations had affected his family, especially his children.

"I also have to protect not only

myself, but also the (police) institution against what Lacson said. (He said) that I had connived with the fixers at the (Department of Foreign Affairs) and that I knew (the fixers) because I was a former police chief of Pasay City."

Dolina, who is a lawyer, had headed the Pasay City police in 1998.

Dolina sued Lacson for P1 million in moral damages and another P1 million in exemplary damages and attorney's fees.

He said he filed two counts of libel because Lacson had accused him of manufacturing Garcillano's passport at least twice—once in December 2005 and then again just recently after

the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas said Garcillano's passport did not conform to standards.

Yesterday, Lacson said he had a witness who could prove his claim that Dolina was the one who "delivered" the tampered passport to Garcillano before the ex-poll official appeared in Congress in December.

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ABS-CBN opens settlement talks with victims of stampede

An URGENT APPEAL to our Economic Managers, Congress, the Business Sector, and our People

April 17 is the deadline for the filing of income tax returns and payment of taxes.

Those who religiously pay their taxes are burdened by the additional taxes which were recently legislated.

This is because MANY DO NOT PAY THEIR TAXES. And THOSE WHO DO, PAY VERY LITTLE OF WHAT THEY SHOULD. The result is unfairness and inequity.

THERE IS AN URGENT NEED:

1. For the business community to set the example by paying the correct taxes.
2. For both the Business Sector & Government to work together to EXPAND the tax base. It should NOT be the honest taxpayer alone that should carry the burden of paying taxes.
3. For CONGRESS to AMEND Section 110 (B) of the E-VAT Law which diminishes the competitiveness of our local manufacturers who have high imported and raw material and parts content.

Under Section 110(B) of the EVAT Law, when the Output Tax paid exceeds 101%, ONLY 70% of the Output Tax can be claimed as input tax by business. This is unfair to business and therefore Section 110 (B) must be amended.

On the other hand, retail and distribution outlets, whose profit margin is less than one (1) percent of their sales, may be forced to close their stores.

OTHER CONCERN OF THE BUSINESS SECTOR:

1. Corporate Income Tax increase from 32% to 35%

This is an additional tax burden to business. With 35% tax, the Philippines has one of the highest tax rates in the world, making the country less competitive in attracting investments.

2. The 5-year Amortization of Input Tax on Capital Equipment

Section 110 (A) (2) states that the input VAT paid on capital equipment must be amortized monthly over a five-year period. This is an added burden to businesses who import capital equipment but are NOT granted tax exemption from payment of duties & VAT.

DETERMINED EFFORT BY ALL TO FIGHT GRAFT

The Business Sector and Our People must support the Economic Managers headed by DOF Secretary Gary Teves for them not to waver in their commitment to stop graft and corruption at both the BIR and Customs and improve their image of the past 60 years of being the most corrupt agencies.

Accordingly:

- The drive to go after and prosecute tax evaders and smugglers under the RATE (Run After Tax Evaders) and RATS (Run After The Smugglers) must be pursued thru a visible radio, print & TV campaign by the DOF as we approach the April 17 TAX Deadline for Filing Income Tax returns.
- The Bureau of Customs and the BIR must be fully automated using the latest technology. Only 40% of their transactions are computerized. The rest are done manually.

We commend, Hon. Herminio Teves, Vice-Chairman of the Ways & Means Committee & Sub-committee Chair of the Oversight committee where COPW was invited as reactor to ALL the consultations held at the BIR Office with 12 major industry groupings. Congressman Teves published his findings in the Philippine Star on February 20, 2006.

WE have more than ENOUGH LAWS.
The challenge is how to properly implement these laws down to the lowest levels of the bureaucracy nationwide.

WE SEEK THESE REFORMS:

- Implement ASAP, E.O. 482 requiring a single window for cargo clearance so that a document filed in other ASEAN countries should be the same document to be used here for customs valuation purposes.
- Link the DOF, SEC, LTO, Customs and the BIR in order to validate import duties & VAT paid, and to plug other loopholes.
- Implement BSP Circular No. 472. This mandates banks to require two documents - the Income Tax Return filed with the BIR, and the Financial Statement filed with the SEC, which is a public document - as a condition for loan approval.
- Local governments and the national government need to coordinate and cooperate with each other to computerize a common database of taxpayers' transfer certificates of title (TCTs) for greater transparency and more efficient revenue collection.
- Accelerate the setting of standards for tax compliance per industry. This can be done by benchmarking 200 taxpayers from each industry based on their gross sales, net VAT, income tax paid, and profit margin. Revenue Memorandum Order 4-2006 provides guidelines to effect standardization.
- All CPAs must be accredited. Rules covering their practice must be established nationwide.

MEANWHILE, the COPW and the Office of the President are ONE in lowering the prices of basic commodities for our people in the depressed areas and the low middle class with her program to lower the prices of sugar, rice, cooking oil, generic medicine, LPG and increasing the number of rolling stores by 50%.

The effective collection of taxes and duties combined with responsible government spending will fast-track the government's economic reform programs, especially those that will help improve the lives of the marginalized sector and the lower middle class. In the end, everybody pays less but gets more in better services.



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To better serve the public, this ad appears in major newspapers and tabloids as comic strip.

From page A1

Jimenez of the Volunteers Against Crime and Corruption (VACC), which is helping the victims.

Asked about a possible settlement, Puno replied that this would depend on the outcome of the discussions.

Unseemly haste

In its 46-page suit against the justice department, ABS-CBN said its officials "were made the easy targets in the hectic quest for somebody to blame."

It said Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez and his department "proceeded with unseemly haste in conducting so-called investigations in their mad rush to set up a supposed basis for criminal prosecution."

"The makeshift outcome of the made-to-order and mock preliminary investigation has already been predetermined and the results are inexorably skewed to arrive at a finding of supposed probable cause for the filing of a criminal complaint against the petitioners," it said.

Puno said his clients "do not stand any chance of being accorded a fair and impartial preliminary investigation."

He said the DOJ "has plainly overstepped the bounds of its authority and has permanently disqualified itself from conducting a preliminary investigation."

The petitioners in the suit were network officials Ma. Rosario Santos-Concio, Ma. Socorro V. Vidanes, Marilou Almaden, Cipriano Luspo, Morly Stewart, Harold James Nieve, Norbert Vidanes, Francisco Rivera, Mel Feliciano and Jean Owen Ercia.

State Prosecutor Leo Dacera agreed to defer the proceedings for 10 days, until April 6, after ABS-CBN lawyers had formally informed the panel of their suit in the Court of Appeals.

Lavin, NBI-National Capital Region executive officer, said the prosecution would definitely be affected if the respondents could convince the victims to withdraw their criminal complaints.

"Based on the reactions of the victims who attended the preliminary investigation at the Department of Justice, it appears that they are hoping that the network officials would talk to them regarding a possible amicable settlement," he told reporters yesterday.

Lavin said the victims cheered and clapped when Puno brought up the possibility of the network entering into a settlement with them.

"Because most of the victims are marginalized, they would be more than willing to talk things out with ABS-CBN to get financial assistance instead of spending more money to attend hearings at the DOJ," Lavin said.

He added that once the victims decided to withdraw their complaints, the respondents could file the appropriate motion to dismiss the case.

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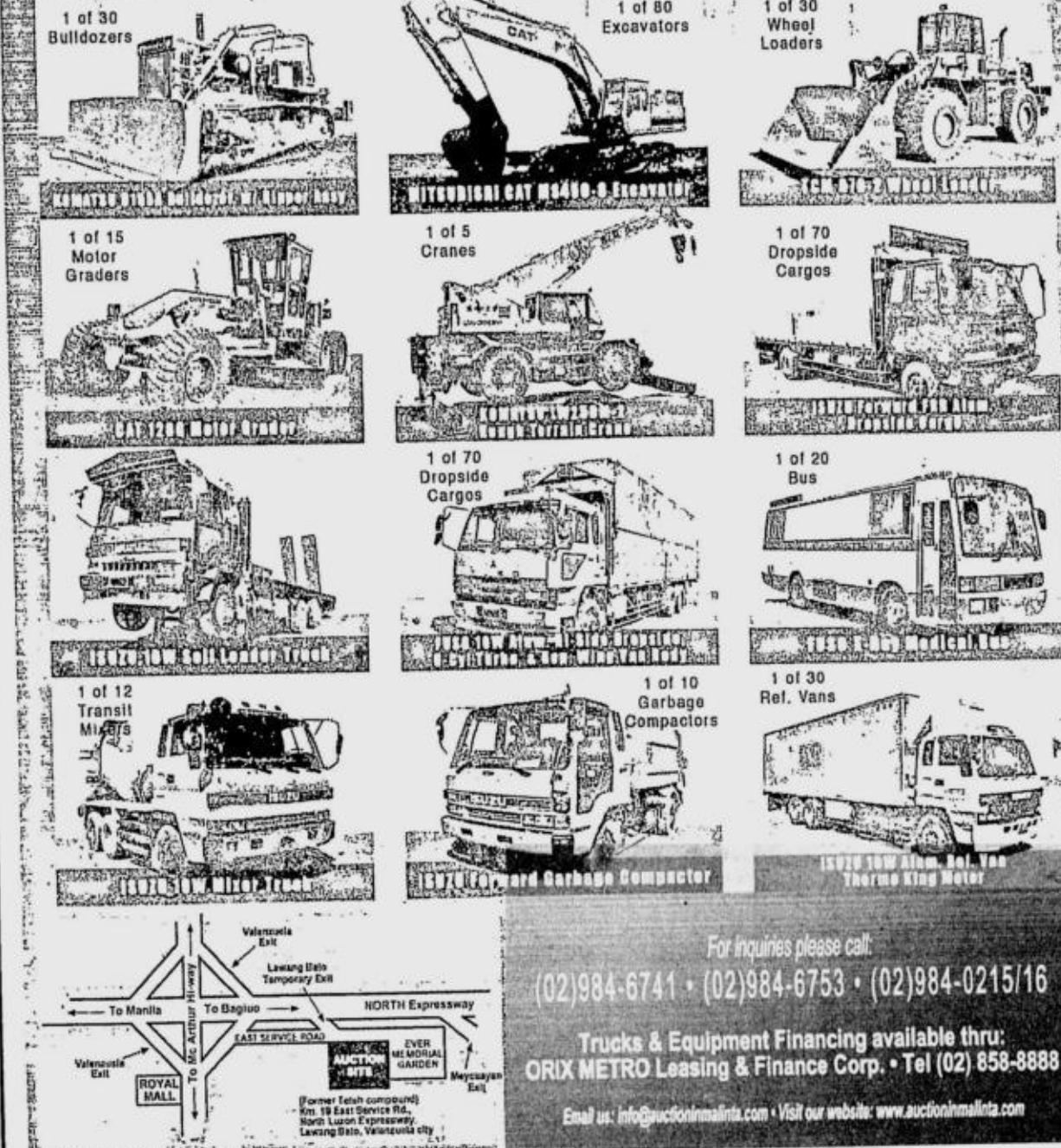
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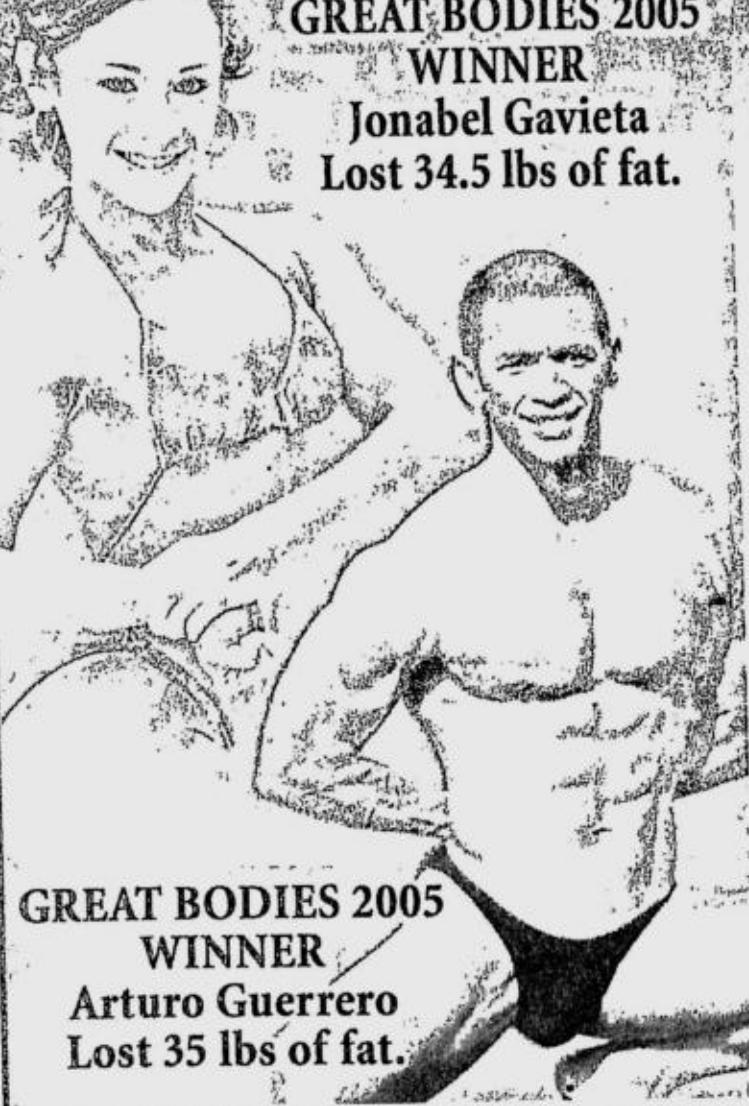
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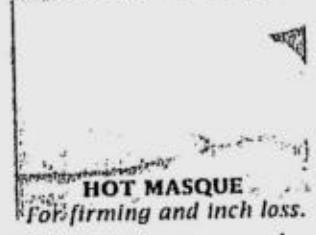
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9 killed in Sulu explosion; 20 others hurt

From page A1

away from harm," said Amina, who suffered bruises.

Looters with rescuers

From underneath the tricycle, Amina said she saw people running in all directions, most of them shouting and crying as bursts of gunfire rang out. Locals explained that people here, including policemen, fire their guns in the air during emergencies to alert residents.

Dr. Judel Isahac of the Red

Cross said that when volunteer workers arrived at the store shortly after the incident, they found mangled bodies strewn near the entrance.

As they were recovering the dead and the injured, he said unidentified people rushed into the store, emptying the cash registers and hauling off goods.

A Philippine National Police spokesperson said he could not say whether terrorists were involved.

"It would be premature to say so at this time," Senior Supt.

Samuel Pagdilao said.

He said US bomb experts were helping determine the type of device used. The Americans are part of the large contingent of US troops on a humanitarian mission in Jolo.

Family feud?

It was the second bombing incident in Jolo this year. On Feb. 18, a man was killed and 28 others were wounded in an explosion in a videoke bar.

The island is a stronghold of

the Abu Sayyaf, which has been linked to the Jemaah Islamiyah, Osama bin Laden's Southeast Asian arm.

The Moro National Liberation Front also exerts a big influence in Jolo proper, a police officer said, speaking on background. The group did not normally launch attacks in the area, fearing their own relatives could be hurt.

The Abu Sayyaf has little or no access to the town, keeping its men on the outskirts—Patikul and Indanan.

The officer said Abu Sayyaf attacks had previously been directed at government troops.

"It might be a family feud. We'll be looking into who were there in the cooperative ... That's the closest possibility," the officer said.

Abu recruits

In Cotabato City, the chief of police of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao said new Abu Sayyaf recruits might be responsible for the Jolo attack.

"There are traces of ASG terror

attacks, they are our prime suspects," Chief Supt. Akmad Mama-linta told the INQUIRER. But he said the police were not discounting other groups.

ARMM Gov. Zaldy Ampatuan directed the police to fast-track the investigation even as he ordered ARMM Social Welfare Secretary Ruby Sahali to address the immediate needs of the survivors and the relatives of those who died. *With reports from Julie S. Alipala and Edwin Fernandez, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

GMA nears record of most ex-AFP appointees

From page A1

Angelo Reyes had also crossed over to the bureaucracy.

No big deal, said Benjamin Defensor. Retired military officers have become a ubiquitous presence in the bureaucracy in many parts of the world.

"That's the current trend," the brother of Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago asserted.

"Why close the door to ex-military men? There's nothing wrong with moving along and making the world better. Today's breed of military officers are well-educated, well-traveled, with very high leadership and management skills. They're armed with combat experience and lessons learned from many years of training and honorably serving the country."

"Outperforming them in any field won't be easy," Defensor told the INQUIRER.

Walk in the park

With a self-assured demeanor, Defensor said he was "very qualified to run the antiterror task force or any civilian agency for that matter."

"A walk in the park, if you ask me," he quipped. "But if there's somebody in the bureaucracy who can do my job better, I'm very willing to give way peacefully."

The practice is "not entirely new. It's also a prerogative of the President," said Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, who oversees more than 230 government agencies.

"And whenever the President makes her choice, nobody should question it," Ermita, a former major general, defense secretary and Batangas congressman, pointed out in a phone interview.

Prerogative

Presidential prerogative? "Fine, but it should be a prerogative to a point. One that is subject to laws or government rules," said Eufemio Domingo, former chair of the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission and the Commission on Audit.

Ms Arroyo's chief of staff, Michael Defensor, credited the practice for what he called "outstanding administration re-

cruits," like former Philippine National Police Director General Leandro Mendoza, now transportation secretary, and Reyes, former interior secretary and now environment secretary.

Defensor cited Mendoza and Reyes for "exceptional work in their respective departments."

Mendoza "has proven to be an asset of the administration," said Ermita, who wondered aloud why some people were making a big deal out of the "old but perfectly legal" practice.

Unfair

Legal, yes, but Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas thinks it is "unfair."

"This crossing-over blocks promotion channels in the bureaucracy and deprives civilians of the chance to build their careers. Sad to say, the practice continues," she said.

In a late 1994 interview (for the three-part series, "The Silent Coup: Militarizing the Bureaucracy"), Sto. Tomas, then Civil Service Commission chair, said the appointment of ex-military officials to civilian posts had created problems, if not unrest, in some government offices.

She cited the demoralization among civilian personnel, noting the sentiment that they were being robbed of the chance to move up the bureaucratic ladder.

"They complain that after working for so long, they find out that their bosses are ex-military—people with their own way of looking at things, a different mind-set, and part of that is you don't question, you just obey," the former CSC head said.

Sto. Tomas, who admitted to having disagreed with the Ramos administration over bureaucracy-related issues, said this was one government policy "that should be thoroughly studied."

"Almost every week, you see some colonel or general being sworn in. Do you ever see a career executive officer being sworn in? Why are they doing this to the civilian bureaucracy?" she said.

Do something

Eleven years later, Sto. Tomas said her views "have not changed."



DAVID FILE PHOTO

"I've always held the same views," Sto. Tomas told the INQUIRER.

Outspoken as ever, she believed that "government should do something about this crossing-over practice" and that "civilian and military personnel should retire at the same time so that nobody crosses over."

"Either lower the retirement age for civilians (which is 65) or raise the retirement age for those in the military (which is 56)," Sto. Tomas said.

Like the labor secretary, current CSC Chair Karina Constantino-David expressed serious concerns over the perceived increase in the numbers of retired military and police officials appointed to key government posts.

Precisely how many of them are in government is not clear, Carolina Hernandez, a political science professor at the University of the Philippines, wrote in the UP publication "Public Policy."

Hernandez, president of the independent think tank Institute for Strategic and Development Studies, said "it's not easy to obtain information on presidential appointments even as they should be readily available to the public under the principle of freedom of information."

During the martial law years,

only retired AFP chiefs of staff and ex-ambassadors were given government posts by then President Ferdinand Marcos.

Today, "nearly all retired generals and service commanders all the way" seem to be rewarded with government posts, David said.

Widening circle

Making the same observation, opposition Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr. noted the "widening circle of military people in civilian offices these days."

"GMA (Ms Arroyo) continues to surround herself with people with military backgrounds, clearly one of her strategies in strengthening her hold on power," Pimentel said.

Partido ng Manggagawa party-list Rep. Renato Magtubo observed "a clear pattern in the employment of military retirees in the civilian bureaucracy."

"A reward for services rendered," according to Magtubo. "Not really a worst-case scenario, but the current administration seems bent on institutionalizing the practice. That's scary."

Akbayan party-list Rep. Loretta Ann Rosales described as "terrible" the thought of "ex-military officers with mind-sets that are different from everyone else being assigned to key government posts and thinking of military solutions to people's problems."

The practice, "now subject to abuse by those in power, should be scrutinized, if not totally stopped," Rosales said.

Good and bad

Like everyone else, retired military officers have good and bad qualities, according to Sen. Manuel "Mar" Roxas II.

"They say those in the military have a different mind-set, people who are not sensitive to social issues. But they're considered way ahead when you talk about stuff like loyalty, discipline, obedience and leadership," Roxas said.

But he said he did not believe that certain government posts should be the "exclusive reserve" of military people.

"Overpopulating the bureaucracy with too many military minds will be a big mistake. Taking in a few outstanding ones may be a good idea," he said. "It's all in the balance, really."

Sensitive issue

Hernandez, who had served in the Davide Commission that probed the failed military coup of 1989 and the Feliciano Commission that looked into the 2003 Oakwood mutiny, called the continued appointment of ex-AFP officers a politically sensitive issue for several reasons:

- The widespread feeling among military officers that they are being treated as second-class citizens in a country they have served so well.

- Military officers believe that after they retire they can return to the civilian fold and, if qualified, should be eligible to serve the country in a civilian capacity.

- There's the civilian perception that appointing retired officers to key government posts may not be enough to stop the practice because the appointing power believes that it is not inappropriate to recycle retired officers.

"Overpopulating the bureaucracy with too many military minds will be a big mistake. Taking in a few outstanding ones may be a good idea," he said. "It's all in the balance, really."

"Those who fear the further militarization of the government may have serious misgivings about electing another retired military officer to the presidency as he may similarly overpopulate the government with military retirees," she said.

But she said "giving retired military officers a stake in the preservation of the constitutional order by making them power holders can enhance their support for that order."

Public reaction

Hernandez said strong public reaction to the appointment of retired military officers to key government posts may not be enough to stop the practice because the appointing power believes that it is not inappropriate to recycle retired officers.

"What is required to limit the practice is to adopt a policy that retirees, whether from the military or civilian bureaucracies, should no longer be eligible for reappointment to government."

"This would unclog the promotion channels and enable bright, young, able and energetic civil servants to move forward and in the long run develop a professional civilian bureaucracy that can provide the consistency and continuity of policies, regardless of the vicissitudes and uncertainties of politics," she said.

In a paper titled "We were Soldiers: Military Men in Politics and the Bureaucracy," journalist Glenda Gloria wrote that "for so long as the military brokers political transitions, for so long as there are insurgencies and rebellions that make the nation dependent on its Armed Forces, and for so long as weak civilian institutions remain vulnerable to destabilizing forces, this pattern of military appointments to the bureaucracy shall continue."

Gloria, managing editor of Newsbreak magazine, said "regimes will choose this path rather than risk an armed confrontation with their politicized soldiers."

Boundaries blurred

Here, "the military performs defense functions and the civilian authority governs society. When these institutional boundaries become blurred, civilian control tends to decrease and erode

presidential appointees to "make sure that only the best and brightest will make it to appointive posts so as not to compromise the quality of our service to the public."

Insulate bureaucracy

The two lawmakers called on David to consider resigning.

"If David knows she is no longer capable of doing her job without rancor for the administration, she should voluntarily resign. She said it was better for her to show some *delicadeza* than continue hitting the President who appointed

Surprising

He said the presidential appointments that could be subject to scrutiny through the Commission on Appointments were limited to Cabinet level posts, colonels and generals of the Armed Forces and high positions in the Department of Foreign Affairs.

"The CSC chair's criticism of the President was surprising. If she has some objections to some appointments, she could have raised these directly with the President," said Macarambon.

Veloso said the CA members had been meticulous in challenging the qualifications of

her based on mutual trust and confidence," Macarambon said.

Reacting to calls for her to step down, David said: "This has nothing to do with rancor or anything personal. We are an independent constitutional body and we are concerned with making sure that rules and laws are followed."

"Being a professional in government, the intention is not to cause destabilization, but to ensure the insulation of the bureaucracy from politics," she said. *Reports from Gil C. Cabacungan Jr., Leila B. Salaverria and Michael Lim Ubac*

Corrections

IN THE MARCH 21 ISSUE, a story on Page A3—"ULTRA STAMPEDE: ABS-CBN lawyers accuse DOJ of prejudging case"—mis-spelled the name of an ABS-CBN lawyer and his former government position. The correct name of the lawyer is Regis—not Reghis—Puno. He was a justice—not interior—undersecretary.

IN THE MARCH 22 ISSUE, a photo caption on Page A7 misstated the name of a descendant of Dr. Jose Rizal. The correct name of Rizal's descendant is Asuncion Lopez Bantug—not Asoncio Lopez Rizal.

Readers may send their requests for correction of factual errors in writing to the Day Desk, Philippine Daily Inquirer, PDI Building, Chino Roces Avenue corner Magsaysay Street, Makati City, fax Nos. 897-47-93/94; e-mail address: daydesk@inquirer.com.ph.

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Bunye: President is wielding power judiciously

From page A1

first installment of a three-part INQUIRER special report, which was largely based on an interview with Civil Service Commission Chair Karina Constantino-David conducted on Nov. 17, 2005.

Bunye did not address the specific cases cited in the report. Instead, he made a general statement on how the complaints were handled.

"The President's power to hire and fire functionaries in the executive branch has been exercised judiciously in the public interest and she has been sensitive to the public pulse in the case of some controversial appointments that were rectified," he said.

To appease critics, Bunye assured the public that the government would continue to uphold "utmost professionalism in the service, purge the misfits and undesirables, and make sure the conduct of officials are consistently aboveboard."

No reason given

Palace officials have not been too eager to answer questions on how the President chooses her appointees, preferring instead to give the standard reply that the choices were the President's sole prerogative.

At the Kapihan sa Maynila forum, Soliman said that when she

was social welfare secretary, she was allowed four assistant secretaries, but a fifth was added during her term.

She said Malacañang had informed her of the new appointment through a letter and did not explain why another post was

"There was no reason given. It was just understood," said Soliman, a member of the Black and White Movement, a group seeking Ms Arroyo's ouster.

The salary of the appointee came from Malacañang, but the funds for his office equipment came from the department, Soliman said.

Despite her having three undersecretaries at the DSWD, Soliman added, a fourth was appointed to the department in 2002.

Administrative Code

Under the Administrative Code of 1987, the social welfare secretary shall be assisted by two undersecretaries and three

TUESDAY,
MARCH 28, 2006.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

After 186 years, woman leads PMMA graduating cadets

From page A1
graduate as No. 1 in the history of the academy is something to be proud of," Calibjo told the INQUIRER.

But the road had not been easy, she began.

"The hardest part was during the one-month probation period in my first year here. [That was] when we were being transformed from civilians to midshipmen," she said.

Like other cadets, Calibjo had to undergo physical training which tested her stamina and patience.

The academy, established in 1820, has a quasi-military training program that prepares its cadets to be merchant marine officers in shipboard and shore-based positions in compliance with global requirements of the international maritime industry.

Equal treatment

"Men or women—we [are] all treated equally," Calibjo said. "It's not easy being a [female] cadet, one has to go with [male] cadets in everything and it takes a lot of guts to be with them."

The PMMA first opened its doors to female applicants in 1997 and has been producing midshipwomen since.

During her early years at the academy, Calibjo experienced discrimination, relating how male cadets looked down on her and doubted her competence for the training.

She shrugged this off and promised herself that she would not only survive, she would excel at the academy.

"There were 500 of us when we entered the academy four years ago, but around 200 stayed on," Calibjo noted.

Navy pilot

She is the eldest among three children of Rodolfo and Babel Calibjo, both public school teachers in Antique.

Calibjo was studying accounting at the University of the Philippines in Iloilo but dreamed of becoming a Navy pilot. Inspired to pursue her dream by relatives who were either Scout Rangers or merchant marine officers, she decided to enter the PMMA.

She became a consistent honor student, topping her classes during her early years in the academy.

Calibjo went on board for the first time during her third year undergoing practical training on the MV Capo Noli, a Portuguese vessel with an Italian principal.

"Our route was purely European countries—from Spain, Italy, Slovenia, Croatia, Bulgaria to Ukraine, including the upper part of the Kerch Strait," she said.

She was able to save money from her allowances while undergoing on-board training for nine months and even sent her siblings to school.

When she returned to the academy last year, Calibjo maintained her good standing in class and emerged as the top cadet of her batch.

Woman warrior

Calibjo shared a favorite line from "Mulan," a 1998 Walt Disney film: "A flower that blooms in adversity is the most rare and beautiful of all."

"Mulan" is based on a Chinese folk tale about a plucky Chinese teenage girl who disguises herself as a boy to fight against her country's invaders.

"What I am now is the [product] of [my own] sweat and blood. I compete not with others but with my own standards," she said, dedicating her success to her parents.

This year's graduating class will receive their diplomas on the second week of June with Calibjo

earning for herself the honor of being "star cadet."

The PMMA, which is situated on a 60-hectare campus here, is considered the pillar among maritime institutions in the country.

PMMA history

The academy was created by virtue of a Spanish royal decree in 1820 as the Escuela Nautica de Manila. From its original location on Calle Cabildo in Intramuros, Manila, the academy transferred several times.

It was temporarily closed during the Philippine Revolution and reopened by American officials on Dec. 15, 1899, as the Nautical School of the Philippine Islands.

Later this was changed to the Philippine Nautical School (PNS). In 1963, then President Diosdado Macapagal signed Republic Act No. 3680 converting the PNS to the PMMA.

The school was relocated to Fort Bonifacio in Makati City in 1968. From then on, it was placed under the Department of Transportation and Communication. In 1996, it was placed directly under the supervision of the Commission on Higher Education.

On Feb. 2, 1998, the PMMA moved to its present campus in the coastal town of San Narciso, Zambales.

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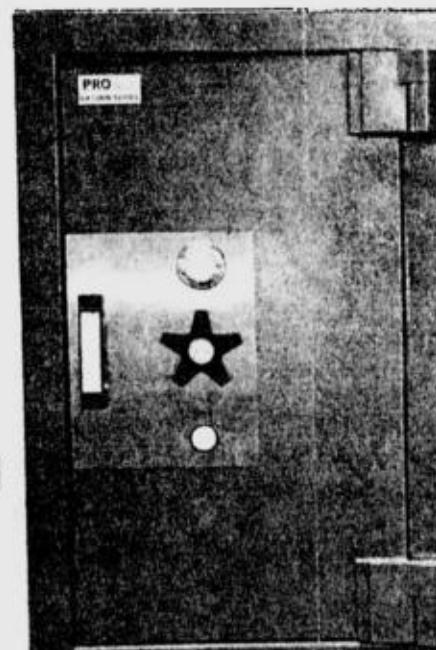
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'Sari-sari' store by day, condom outlet by night

From page A1
night, it remains open and sells other stuff.

A typical nighttime customer, usually a woman, knocks on the back door, hands over P2.50 and whispers: "Papalita ko'g medyas (I want to buy socks.)"

Emma hands her a condom.

The store in Poblacion District 3 in this town doesn't even have a name. Emma, the owner, is a barangay health worker and sees her role as a retailer of contraceptives as a way of helping her poor community.

She has other contraceptives, too, and these are prominently listed outside her store, along with their respective prices.

"It's important to keep families small because it's difficult to raise a big family these days," Emma told journalists who visited her store last week.

Her store is one of the 63 community-based distributor (CBD) outlets for contraceptives spread throughout nine coastal barangays of Dauin. The stores have blossomed since the municipal government supported the Integrated Population and Coastal Resource Management Initiative (Ipopcorn).

Feeding the population

Mayor Rodrigo Alanano embraced the program after noting how the town's fast-growing population had taken a toll on its natural resources. He was committed to managing family size in the community to ensure sustainability in the long haul.

Alanano said he decided to adopt the program after he noticed that the size of families along the coastal barangays—an average of six people per household—was bigger than

those of families living in other areas.

Also, families living along the coast had a growth rate of 7.8 percent, in contrast to 2.4 percent for the rest of the country, and the 2.1 percent for the province.

"This has largely contributed to overfishing as a means of livelihood and food source which need to be addressed to prevent further damage to the marine resources," Alanano explained.

Family planning

He said that through this integrated population and coastal resource management program, the quality of life of families in the coastal communities had improved. And with less pressure on the coastal ecosystem, the people have been assured of food security.

The mayor then enlisted volunteers from the youth and married couples. They were trained by Ipopcorn, the Silliman University Angelo King Center for Research and Environmental Management and the Marina Clinic of the Silliman Medical Center Foundation Inc. to help educate their peers on the advantages of population and coastal resource management.

"I was also aware of the huge influence of the Roman Catholic Church, of which I am a member. So I told my parish priest, 'Father, we both have the same constituents and we cannot be fighting. Please take care of their spirit. I'll take care of their body and their basic needs,'" Alanano recalled.

Few people, more fish

To date, the population thrust of the local government unit has been proceeding smoothly.

Since the Ipopcorn program was introduced in 2002, the population in the nine coastal barangays, based on an actual head count of residents, dropped to negative .25 percent in 2005. There were, however, no immediate figures on the actual number of childbirths in the three-year period.

Marine sanctuary

Dauin also established a marine sanctuary to allow fish and other marine resources to breed and grow in order to replenish the depleted fish stocks of the town.

Fishermen had complained that their fish catch was getting smaller and smaller, and they had to paddle farther from shore just to be able to catch enough for their families' daily needs. Barely two years after the establishment of the marine sanctuary, the fishermen reported increased harvests.

Narciso Romero, chair of the Dauin Bantay Dagat Association, said that after three hours of fishing, they could now get two to three kilos of fish, compared to the half-kilo they used to get before the sanctuary was set up.

Dauin's program to manage the environment and population had also earned for itself the Gawad Galing Pook award last year in Malacañang. Alanano said this award would inspire them to continue to do more for their town.

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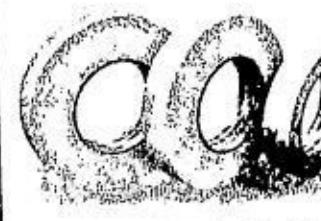
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3. All participants will be grouped into five (5) teams with ten (10) members each and will be provided with an egg basket.
4. The objective of the game is for each team to find all ten (10) color coded eggs. Each egg contains instructions/clues on where to find the remaining hidden eggs.
5. The first team to complete the eggs automatically wins the grand prize.
6. Interested parties can register from March 31 – April 2, 2006 during mall hours at the information counters of Robinsons Malls. A corresponding stub will be given to each participant which will then be the participant's ticket to qualify for the egg hunting. The stub should be presented at the activity area on the day of the event. Assembly time is 1pm for all registered participants.
7. The first 70 registrants for Galleria, Manila, Imus, Metro East, Pampanga, Novoliches & Pioneer and 50 registrants for Los Baños, Calinta, Sta. Rosa, Desmarinas, Lipa and Angeles, aged 7 – 12 years

old will be accommodated in this activity. No purchase requirement is needed to be able to join and register.

8. Only 1 group will win the cash prize of P7,000.00 while all non-winning teams will be receiving gift packs.

9. Awarding of winners for the Egg Hunting Contest will be held after the puppet/magic show in all malls (except Robinsons Cainta).

10. Robinsons Malls employees and their relatives up to the second degree of consanguinity and affinity are disqualified from joining the contest.

11. Failure to comply with any of the above contest rules and regulations will automatically disqualify participants to join the game.

B. ON-THE-SPOT EGG PAINTING CONTEST

1. The contest is open to kids aged 10-14 years old. Interested parties may register from March 31 – April 2, 2006 at the information counters of participating Robinsons Malls. A maximum of twenty 20 registrants will be accommodated.

2. Contestants will be provided with eggs and art materials. They will be given 45 minutes to paint their eggs.

3. The entries will be judged according to creativity, originality and finished product presentation.

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Age Requirement: 7-12 years old

Time: 3:00-4:00 pm
For Galleria, Manila, Metro East, Pioneer, Novoliches, Starmills and Imus only
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The 'other crisis'

THE BUZZ FROM THE PHILIPPINE FUEL ETHANOL Alliance (PFEA) is that a number of investors have expressed eagerness to venture into bioethanol production. But before they pour in the capital, they want to see Congress pass the legal framework that would guarantee a market for their product. The PFEA stressed that "the government must first indicate its seriousness to address the security problem by placing the proper policies to attract investments from the private sector."

EDITORIAL Ethanol, which is made from sugar cane, corn and cassava, is among the biofuels put forward as an answer to the "other crisis"—the oil crisis. It may be that not everyone sees Earth's oil wells running dry, but everybody agrees that cheap oil has run out. When the price of benchmark Dubai crude reached \$36 per barrel in May 2004, hurtling up to the \$60 level, then to a record-high \$70 a barrel in September 2005, all the world scrambled to find viable alternatives to petroleum products. President Macapagal-Arroyo said the oil crisis had become a "real challenge to economic survival." And during the Asean summit held in Malaysia last December, even though oil prices had eased a little, she warned that they could still spin out of control.

Based on the 2004 oil prices and consumption, the Department of Energy estimates that the Philippines could save around P8.2-billion a year in foreign exchange, the value of oil imports that would be "displaced," if all diesel vehicles used coco-diesel (P1.2 billion) and all gasoline-powered vehicles used a 5-percent ethanol blend (P7 billion). This does not include the P14 billion that would be saved from a 10-percent increase in the mileage of vehicles using coco-diesel.

But as has been pointed out in many forums, saving on foreign exchange is only one of the many benefits of using biofuels. With the specter of global warming looming larger every moment, environmentalists hail biofuels as a source of clean energy. With the world's oil supply shrinking fast, biofuels are becoming more and more attractive as renewable energy. More significantly for Filipinos, biofuels are agri-based and can be produced locally from indigenous resources. Thus going into the production of biofuels could open thousands of new jobs in rural areas and provide the much-needed impetus for sustained countryside development.

Brazil, the first country to make ethanol its principal source of energy, produces ethanol at around \$46.20 per barrel, far lower than the current world market price of crude oil, which hovers around \$60 per barrel, although in various retail outlets, it sells at about the same price as gasoline in the Philippines. But this does not diminish the pivotal significance of local ethanol—or biofuels—production in the larger goal of reducing the country's dependence on imported oil.

All this our national leaders must surely know. Yet the farthest we have gone in that direction is House Bill 4629, also known as the Bioethanol Fuel Bill. The measure seeks to provide the legal framework for the local manufacture and use of bioethanol as transport fuel. Although the bill focuses mostly on bioethanol, its principal author, Bukidnon Rep. Miguel Zubiri, has assured that, if enacted, it will entitle other biofuel players to the same package of incentives, including tariff exemptions and easier access to credit. But while the Zubiri bill was approved by the House of Representatives in November 2005, it continues to languish in the Senate. A complementary bill filed by Sen. Manuel Roxas, which would promote the production, distribution and use of motor vehicles powered by alternative fuels, seems to have also been forgotten.

No doubt the members of Congress are aware of this "other crisis," although their collective response to it makes us suspect that they may not fully understand its full dimensions. Or maybe, they just don't care. And so it waits to be addressed like one.

This is shortsighted, because rare is the crisis, like this one, whose solution promises to simultaneously provide multiple solutions to other pressing national problems. Here is an opportunity for our leaders to show that despite their serious political differences and clashing ambitions, they can still come together to work for the larger national interest. Can they summon the will to do it?

TUESDAY, MARCH 28, 2006

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Trivia overload

VIEWPOINT



Juan L. Mercado

And coverage by media reflects this shriveled ranking.

Official blindness is one reason. The press is also hobbled by old structures. "Our ossified concepts of news beats obstruct the sustained coverage of significant events," Cebu's 2001 Press Freedom Week pooled editorial asserted.

"We need to report significance more consistently," it said. "We must point out consequences... And we need to discern what lies over the horizon. He who does not take note of what is distant," Confucius once pointed out, "will find sorrows well at hand."

Another reason is an internal brain drain. Trained writers find better-paying jobs doing PR fluff for the entertainment industry, a University of the Philippines study found out. Others ghost write for executives. Few sign up with the media where S&T have lower-drawer priority.

Lack of background compel some journalists to troll for 30-second "sound bytes." Few probe below surface utterances.

"How tall is an abaca plant?" asked the reporter parachuted in for the Southern Leyte mudslide. "And the cause was deforestation, right?" The flawed question signaled his next broadcast intro, facts or no facts.

"Shallowness guts the soul of our craft," the Cebu Daily News has pointed out. Superficiality results in lack of clarity and failure to influence policy.

Many also write in a dull manner. "Many writers remain steeped in the 5Ws...and harp on lengthy names of institutions or agencies as sources of stories," Librero says. "Few look at leads that deal with outputs, results, or impact on the lives of people."

"As the 21st century awakens, science is creeping into every beat of journalists," tearing down old, hand-me-down newsroom structures, notes the study, "How The Press Covers Science." "The journalists who can strike a balance between technical correctness and readability is a rare breed."

But those who succeed in cutting through political trivia and apply their skills to issues of real national concern can render a signal service.

Questions

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros



ADRIAN QUIÑONES HAD A VERY INTERESTING letter in the Opinion section last week. It went: "Conrado de Quiros wondered aloud why we have lost the balls to go against a dictatorship. The answer is simple: We toppled a dictatorship before and had a chance to make real democracy work but failed in the latter. For the majority who are poor, life under the dictatorship and what came after EDSA I made no difference. That news about 'every day is a state of emergency for the poor' explains why."

It's a thought worth pondering. My own reaction to it is that while that may explain in part the frustration and cynicism that have crept into the national psyche, it doesn't put the problem to rest. In fact, it raises more questions than answers.

To begin with, I don't know that very many people will buy the premise that life for the poor during martial law and after EDSA I was pretty much the same. Or indeed more generally that the poor do not particularly care whether they live in a democracy or dictatorship. I do know that the poor do poorer materially and spiritually when Marcos declared martial law compared to before. Corruption and coercion were there long before martial law, but martial law raised the bar on them, stunting progress altogether. We are still reeling from its effects.

I do know as well that the whole nation breathed a sigh of relief when martial law was over, the poor as much as the rich and middle class. The hope that things can be better is just as real to human beings, whatever their class or caste, as the tangibility of it. To think of the poor as idealists is to romanticize them, but to think of them as creatures that feel only hunger (and sex) pangs is to insult them.

But I leave other readers to argue the point. As I said, the explanation raises only more complications, the answer only raises more questions. The one question that immediately stares you in the face is: Why did we bungle the chance to make real democracy work?

There are many theories about this, most of

which is system that is built not on leaders making it work for the people but on the people making it work for themselves. We failed to make democracy work for many reasons, but the most fundamental one is that we, the people, the citizens, thought the business of making it work fell only on our leaders, not on us.

The second question that Quiñones' answer raises is: If we toppled a dictatorship but failed to build a real democracy after EDSA I—and indeed after EDSA II—why should the attitude be, "Let's give up"? Why shouldn't the attitude be, "Let's try and try again until we succeed"?

The second problem is related to the first. We find it so easy to give up because we don't want to work for it in the first place. We repossess the task of building a better world on our leaders and complain bitterly later that they are no better than the ogres they've slain. Of course, they are, or will be, unless we prevent them from being so. In this country more than anywhere else, power being a potent elixir for transformation into ogre-hood. No vigilance, no freedom. No people power—in the real sense that it is exercised daily and not merely every 15 years—no democracy.

Cassius was right: It is not in our stars but in ourselves that we are underlings. Only people who have worked so long and so hard and failed to achieve their goal have a right to feel frustrated. People who leave the doing to others, feeling called upon to bestir themselves only now and then, deserve to be miserable. Only people who have toiled every day of their lives to make the country better and failed to do so have a right to feel betrayed. People who have passport and visa in hand while staying around to wait and see, or who are just as willing to accept dictatorship as much as democracy, whichever does not require more work or sacrifice, deserve only oppression or a life of exile.

Genius is 99 percent perspiration and 1 percent inspiration, as Thomas Edison said. The reverse isn't true, it's just a ready-made excuse for failure.

Keep corruption out of huge AFP spending

COMPARISON HAS BEEN MADE BETWEEN THE way barangay assemblies across the country were used to launch the "people's initiative" and the way "consensus" was forged during the martial law years to approve the Marcos constitution. In the latter, it was observed that raised hands were passed off as a plebiscite. One major difference, though, that has been ignored between these two assemblies is that during martial law, the media were not operating, whereas today the media are dominated by those who oppose Charter change and President Macapagal-Arroyo. The issues have been widely discussed all over the country and in fact the critics have dominated.

Another point raised by Cha-cha critics is that local governments were mobilized to herd people to the assemblies and affix their signatures to the initiative petition. Some media belabored allegations that local leaders were funded to organize the signing and that some signatures were bought. But since when in this country did the citizenry, both in the urban and rural areas, ever assemble without being gathered, transported and fed by political leaders? The opposition should know: they hire people for rallies which cost no less than P50 million when they are as big as those mounted in Makati. Even the Left provides transportation and food for its members. As to the signature buying, I wouldn't be surprised if this happened. Habits die hard, but that doesn't make the initiative invalid.

I felt sad reading the remarks of senators like Juan Flavie which show such venom and viciousness toward Charter change. Flavie was quoted as saying that the Senate would scrutinize each and every signature, which would take two years. The senators are circling the wagons, desperately fighting for survival, but I suspect that deep in their hearts they know that a parliamentary/unicameral shift is the only way to put our economy on the path to modernity, like our dynamic neighbors in Asia have done, and rescue our political system from the poisoned atmosphere and the paralyzing and expensive gridlock between the two chambers of Congress.

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan



GMA minced no words when she addressed the PMA graduates in Baguio: no more raps on the knuckles or push-ups. The message was delivered clearly to the military as well as the new graduates joining them: those who staged a mutiny or attempted a coup would be dealt with severely under the Articles of War and other applicable laws. It's a timely message directed particularly to those with a messianic complex in the AFP. As Defense Secretary Avelino Cruz bluntly put it, military officers have to accept the fact that when they chose to enter the military service, they forfeited their right to engage in any political exercise, except the right to vote. Those who want to act like politicians should first get out of the service.

That's the "stick" part of her message. The "carrot" part pertains to efforts to modernize and reform the military through an 8-10 year defense reform program costing P40 billion. This fund, of which GMA has released an initial P5 billion, will buy modern arms, equipment and supplies, as well as helicopters with night-flying capabilities. Eventually, more funds will be mobilized to acquire new planes and ships. But as in the news report the other day about bigger spending in the P1-trillion budget for textbooks and other educational paraphernalia and more medicines for the poor, the citizens' apprehension is whether corruption could be checked in this huge military spending. If the AFP could do this even as it pushes to the final conclusion the prosecution of past and present personnel engaged in corruption, military adventurism would eventually die down.

Long before I began writing about politics, I used to cover art happenings. Sometimes, when I get depressed over our poisoned political system, I muse on how much happier I would have been if I had stayed in that circle. Last week, I was on familiar grounds, attending the opening of the 60-year retrospective exhibit of renowned Filipino master Diosdado Lorenzo, covering his paintings from 1924 up to his death in 1984 (catch it until April 24 at the CCP Main Gallery).

Lorenzo pioneered in the development of modern art here, training at the UP School of Fine Arts, Spain and Reale Academia di Belle Arti in Rome, where he met a beautiful Italian lady named Lina Paolini, who later became his wife. He also taught at the UST School of Fine Arts for 26 years and will always be remembered along with the other great modernist pioneers: Victorio Edades, Carlos "Botong" Francisco and Galo Ocampo. They were among 13 "rebels" against the classical school who inspired several generations of artists, from Manansala in his student days to Jose Joya and Edgar Doctor in more recent times.

The Lorenzo retrospective is, as CCP curator Sid Gomez Hildawa pointed out, a "family reunion." The prominent Lorenzo family of Nueva Ecija, to whom most of the displayed works belong, shows his beautiful portraits of his wife and children, parents and other relatives. Also on display are landscapes of his native San Isidro in their rich tropical colors, his still lives as well as portraits of rural and other working types, which art historian Eric Torres characterized as possessed of "deep-in-the-gut realism."

The retrospective is sponsored by, among others, the Philippine Italian Association and the Office of the Mayor of San Isidro. Mayor Sonia Ramos-Lorenzo, a niece-in-law of the painter, said that from the CCP, the retrospective show will be brought to San Isidro in September, so that the townsfolk can truly appreciate their prominent native son, "our cultural hero." How I wish more of our towns and cities will honor their favorite sons similarly, so that their youths may draw inspiration from them.

'V' is about People Power

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David



AMID the repression and seeming complacency in Britain, a mysterious revolutionary suddenly shows up and throws the authorities into a tailspin. "V" (voiced by Hugo Weaving) evokes images of Guy Fawkes, the 16th century subversive who was executed after he was apprehended attempting to blow up the Houses of Parliament. ("Guy Fawkes Day" is still observed every Nov. 5 in Britain.)

"V" systematically executes key members of the ruling party and begins a campaign to incite a popular uprising. Then he encounters Evey (Natalie Portman), the daughter of an insurgent couple who disappeared after they were picked up by authorities, who has adopted anonymity as a way of life but is forced into an alliance with "V."

Who is "V"? And where will he stop? The task of unmasking the revolutionary falls on a London detective (Stephen Rea), who unwittingly wanders into a conspiracy far more sinister and complicated than he can imagine.

It's said that Moore, who wrote the original novel in the middle of the 1980s as a dig against the conservative reign of Margaret Thatcher, has distanced himself from the film adaptation, which was "updated" to reflect current affairs by the producers, the Wachowski brothers of "Matrix" fame. This is sad, since the "new" "V for Vendetta" succeeds in melding present-day politics with more universal themes.

I WON'T be surprised if our own "People Power" revolution provided Moore and the filmmakers a measure of inspiration. There's something uncanny and touching about watching otherwise "ordinary" Britons sitting up in reaction to "V's" extraordinary televised message of revolution and redemption, and then disappearing from their homes on the night that "V" calls on them to fill up the streets, leaving the High Chancellor no audience to listen to his own televised address. Wasn't that what happened 20 years ago, as we responded to Jaime Cardinal Sin and Butz Aquino, and again in 2001 as text messages lured us to the EDSA Shrine? What if we all showed up on EDSA again, but this time dressed in black capes and wigs, wearing a metal mask of a smiling Guy Fawkes?

"People should not be afraid of their governments. Governments should be afraid of their people," "V" reminds us. What if we got over our fear and apathy and found the courage once more to stand up for freedom and truth? There's something bittersweet about watching an onscreen homage to our history of "People Power," knowing full well that that legacy has of late been pooh-poohed and derided, its early demise pronounced by people who are doing their best to kill its spirit and meaning.

I DON'T know how Britons felt watching the Houses of Parliament, including the iconic Big Ben, being blown up in a spectacular explosion onscreen. But apparently, the scene was not enough to turn off American moviegoers, who catapulted "V for Vendetta" to No. 1 in the box-office over the weekend, earning \$25.6 million in its debut.

Reviewers said the movie could well be about contemporary Britain, the US and even Australia, where conservative governments have kept their hold on political power mainly by feeding on the fear of "others" like immigrants, Muslims, gays and other "deviants." It certainly feels like it's about this country, where lists of suspected "subversives" and "conspirators" abound, and where officials take turns creating alarming scenarios and placating various sectors with price slashes and wage benefits. And where Marcosian barangay assemblies are being held to win "popular" approval of Charter change.

Or maybe we're just reading what we want to read from a simple movie.

Beyond revolutionary disillusion

WORLD VIEW

Václav Havel



post-communist world, but the new generations rising in these societies now seem to be fed up with it.

Ukraine's Orange Revolution, as well as Georgia's Rose Revolution, seems to confirm this. While revolutions in the late 1980s and early 1990s were directed against totalitarian communist regimes, nowadays they aim to get rid of this Mafia-type post-communism.

But to make the change irreversible, a truly independent and incorruptible judiciary is essential. Too often in politically connected cases, suspicions and charges of wrongdoing are not pursued to an unambiguous conclusion. This is understandable: the communist justice system was manipulated to serve the regime, and thousands of judges cannot be replaced overnight.

Although it is clear that a return to the old Soviet Union is not possible, some blame Russian influence for the disillusion in Ukraine. Yes, there are some alarming elements in Russian policy, mostly because Russia has never really known where it begins and where it ends. It either owned or dominated many other nations, and now it is only with grudging reluctance, dealing with the loss of them all.

Some of Russian President Vladimir Putin's statements seem to recall the Soviet era with nostalgia. Indeed, he recently called the disintegration of the Soviet Union a tragic mistake. But Soviet nostalgia has far more to do with Russia's traditional Great Power ambitions than with communism. Russia, I believe, should clearly say—and the international community should clearly say to Russia—that it has defined borders that will not be

questioned, because disputed borders lie at the core of most conflicts and wars.

On the other hand, I don't want to demonize Putin. He may lower oil prices for someone close to him, like Belarus' dictator Alexander Lukashenko, and insist on a market price for someone else, but that's basically all he can do. I don't envision any serious conflict beyond that.

The promise of Western integration is one reason that conflict seems impossible, for it is a question of geography as much as shared values and culture. Ukraine belongs to a united European political entity; the values that Ukraine endorses and that are embedded in its history are European to the core.

The Czech experience shows that implementing all of the European Union's norms so as to be ready to qualify for membership takes some time. But in principle, Ukraine can succeed as well.

Much the same is true for Ukraine and Nato. Partnerships based on shared rules, standards and values are the heartbeat of modern security. Moreover, Nato in a way defines the sphere of a civilization, which of course doesn't mean that Nato's community is better than any other. But it's a community that is good to belong to—provided that people want it and that it makes historical sense for them.

Nato membership carries obligations, because situations may arise—and we have already experienced them—when Nato follows a United Nations appeal and conducts an out-of-area military intervention where, for example, genocide is being committed. In other words, Nato membership, like EU membership, comes at a price. However, I think that the advantages far outweigh any possible disadvantages.

It is up to Ukrainians to decide this for themselves and thus overcome post-revolutionary disillusion.

—Project Syndicate

Václav Havel is a former president of the Czech Republic.

My turn

WHEN I WAS IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, I ONLY GOT P2 for my daily allowance. This wasn't during the "good old days" when a caramel candy cost one centavo, mind you. This was already during the early 1990s, when all an octagonal coin could buy were four Halls candies. I always brought packed lunch and snacks to school, and very rarely could I afford to buy my favorite fruit shake at the canteen. It wasn't because my parents were unkind, they were simply frugal out of necessity.

YOUNG BLOOD

Angeli Verzosa Sobrepeña

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

family wasn't well-off. Besides, I liked oatmeal.

But I didn't always have oatmeal. Sometimes it would be a peanut butter and jelly sandwich; other times it would be spaghetti.

Some of my classmates often made fun of me, and I couldn't blame them. It was dorky to stay in the classroom and eat out of a Tupperware bowl during recess.

It was an emotional hell growing up in a school where everybody else seemed to come from a wealthy family. I can still remember how embarrassed I would be when I couldn't donate a kilo of rice for our out-reach campaigns, not because I didn't want to but because we had nothing to spare. My classmates looked at me as if I were an irresponsible, uncaring jerk. But how could I give away rice when we barely had enough at home?

When we were in sixth grade, I did not sign up for the review classes for the National Elementary Aptitude Test (NEAT) because they weren't being offered for free. My dad believed it was a waste of hard-earned money to pay for the review. He reasoned that the school shouldn't charge us for something that was supposed to be their responsibility. If the teachers were doing a good job preparing us for high school, then the review was unnecessary. I myself was confident that I could pass the exam without attending the review classes, so I didn't mind. Besides, I said to myself, I could review on my own.

But the school did mind. Maybe the school officials thought it wouldn't do the school any good if one of their students flunked the NEAT. So they let me attend the review classes for free.

As it turned out, I didn't need to take the NEAT after all. My name wasn't drawn from the pool of examinees. My dad was right, it would have been a waste of money had he agreed to pay for the review classes.

High school came as a huge relief. I transferred to a school where I finally felt I belonged. My classmates weren't rich. It was okay to say out loud that I didn't have any money (it would have caused an uncomfortable silence if I said that in my old school). We were equal. Our family wasn't the only one that was hard-pressed for money. I wasn't the only one who made promissory notes so I could get an examination permit. I wasn't the only one who couldn't afford a new uniform every school year.

In fact, I soon began to realize that I was one of the lucky few. I was lucky because, unlike some of my classmates, I didn't have to walk all the way to school from home. I was lucky because we always had food on the table. I was lucky because my parents tried their best to make both ends meet.

And how hard they tried! I know they have had to make many sacrifices for my brothers and me. My dad had to leave the comfort of home to try his luck abroad. He has been working away from us for six years and I have yet to hear him complain. My mom had to endure working under a mean boss just so my brothers and I could go to school.

Today, a few weeks before graduation, I think about how much I owe my parents. A stranger asked me once, "Why do parents obligate their first-born to help in the family's expenses?" I couldn't give him an answer then, but I can say now that it isn't about out of obligation that their children do so but out of respect and gratitude.

When I go up the stage in April, I will remember that it was my mom and dad who made it all possible. Now, it's my turn. If I can find a job, that is.

Angeli Verzosa Sobrepeña, 20, is a development journalism student at the University of the Philippines Los Baños.

A blank diploma

Jannell R. Cajote

A FRIEND TOLD ME THAT IT'S VERY SELDOM THAT schools give out real diplomas to their graduates during commencement exercises. Usually, what a graduate gets is a blank diploma—a blank bond paper, rolled up and tied with a ribbon. After that, the graduate is off to the real world in search of new horizons.

Blank diplomas are probably given out because the real ones could get mixed up during the distribution ceremony, leading to confusion among the graduates. But to me it seems very symbolic that the diplomas are blank, for that is exactly what a graduate's future is. It is blank because he himself must write his own future. It is for him to decide what to write on it, when to begin and when to stop.

A blank diploma thus symbolizes the graduate's freedom to choose his future. He may choose to write on it. He may color it. He may draw on it. He may fold it. And he may tear it up and throw it away. Just like any other piece of paper, that blank diploma can be crumpled, torn or discarded, according to one's wishes.

Just like that blank diploma, our future can be empty or colorful, depending on how we want it to be and what we want it to be. That blank diploma signifies one's freedom to pursue one's future. And so, when a graduate gets that piece of paper, he should hold it carefully, because it is not an ordinary piece of paper but it represents our tomorrow.

This is dedicated to the millions of Filipino students who will be marching on stage to receive their hard-earned diplomas.

Jannell R. Cajote, 27, is a lecturer at the social sciences department of De la Salle University-Dasmariñas.

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Mt. Province execs seek stop to war

BAGUIO CITY—A PEACE COUNCIL OF Mt. Province has called for a stop to the ongoing fighting between government soldiers and communist rebels in four Mt. Province towns, saying the conflict has deprived people access to their fields, forests, pasturelands and watersheds.

The council, composed of mayors, religious leaders, community leaders and elders from the towns of Besao, Sagada, Bontoc and Sadanga, all in Mt. Province, is pressing for peace especially with-

in the boundaries where the livelihood of the residents has been disrupted due to the fighting.

In a statement sent to the INQUIRER, the council said it was joining the affected residents in

condemning the conflict.

The statement was read as a pastoral letter in Catholic and Anglican churches in Mt. Province on Sunday.

It was signed by Mayors Alfonso Kiat-ong (Bontoc), Bart Guzman (Besao), Roberto Baaten (Sagada) and Gabino Ganggangan (Sadanga), Presidential Assistant for Cordillera Thomas Killip, barangay officials and Catholic and Anglican priests.

"The affected residents themselves requested the pullout of the military because their livelihood is being disrupted," Thomas Killip, a

former Sagada mayor, said.

The INQUIRER called the Northern Luzon Command (Nolcom) for reaction, but a staff member said it has yet to issue a statement.

However, the Nolcom confirmed that the Army's 5th Infantry Division has been conducting the operation in the province.

The fighting between government soldiers and rebels started in the first week of March with the deployment of soldiers and the launching of air strikes in the forested areas within the boundaries of Besao, Sagada and

Bontoc in Mt. Province and in Abra.

On March 10, an NPA unit ambushed an Army convoy in Barangay Pegew between Sagada and Bontoc after the government troops decided to pull out from the area.

After the ambush, more military troops were deployed and the fighting intensified with air strikes in Besao, Abra, Sagada and Bontoc.

Military encampments and patrols have been reported in Barangay Lamag in Quirino town in Ilocos Sur, in Barangays Dandanac and Tamboan in Besao and

in Mt. Labayan and Mt. Datakan.

Killip said the Army launched a bigger operation in Mt. Province after suspected NPA rebels raided an Army detachment in Mankayan, Benguet on Feb. 10.

Two soldiers and a government militiaman were killed in that attack.

The peace council members said inter-village trading is disrupted due to fear of being caught in the crossfire. The villagers are virtually living in fear with the escalation of the fighting, they said. *Desiree Caluza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Iloilo execs warn of crop disaster as bugs invade

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—AGRICULTURE AND local government officials in Iloilo have warned of the possible spread of the rice black bug that could destroy hundreds of hectares of ricefields in Iloilo province.

Dr. Ildefonso Toledo, acting assistant provincial agriculture officer, said at least 23 hectares of ricefields in Barangs Pinantan, Elizalde and Pinantan Diel in Ajuy town and in Barangay Bacabac in Sara town had been affected as of March 25.

Toledo said at least 1,000 hectares of ricefields would be affected if the spread of the infestation was not stopped.

Iloilo province is the country's second biggest rice producer with a total production of 690,269 metric tons last year.

The rice black bug (*Scotinophara coarctata*), also known as the Malaysian black bug, attacks rice stems and yam. It infests the bases of rice stems and drains them of sap, causing the plants to weaken. The stalks eventually wither (bug burn) and die.

Reduction of production

Toledo said areas affected could suffer a reduction of production from 60 to 80 percent.

The Department of Agriculture is still determining how the bugs managed to infest the ricefields of Iloilo.

Toledo said the bugs can easily be transported because they are nocturnal insects attracted to bright lights.

"They could have been transported by sea vessels and other lighted vehicles," Toledo told the INQUIRER in a telephone interview.

Signs of infestation were first detected in Ajuy and Sara in the second week of this month, said Toledo.

He said detecting and stopping the spread of the black bugs are more difficult because they attack ricefields at night.

The bugs have a maximum height of 8-9 millimeters and a life span of 200 days (5-6 months). They are capable of producing 680 eggs each during their life span.

Main concerns

Toledo said one of their main concerns is how to prevent the bugs from laying eggs and control its spread.

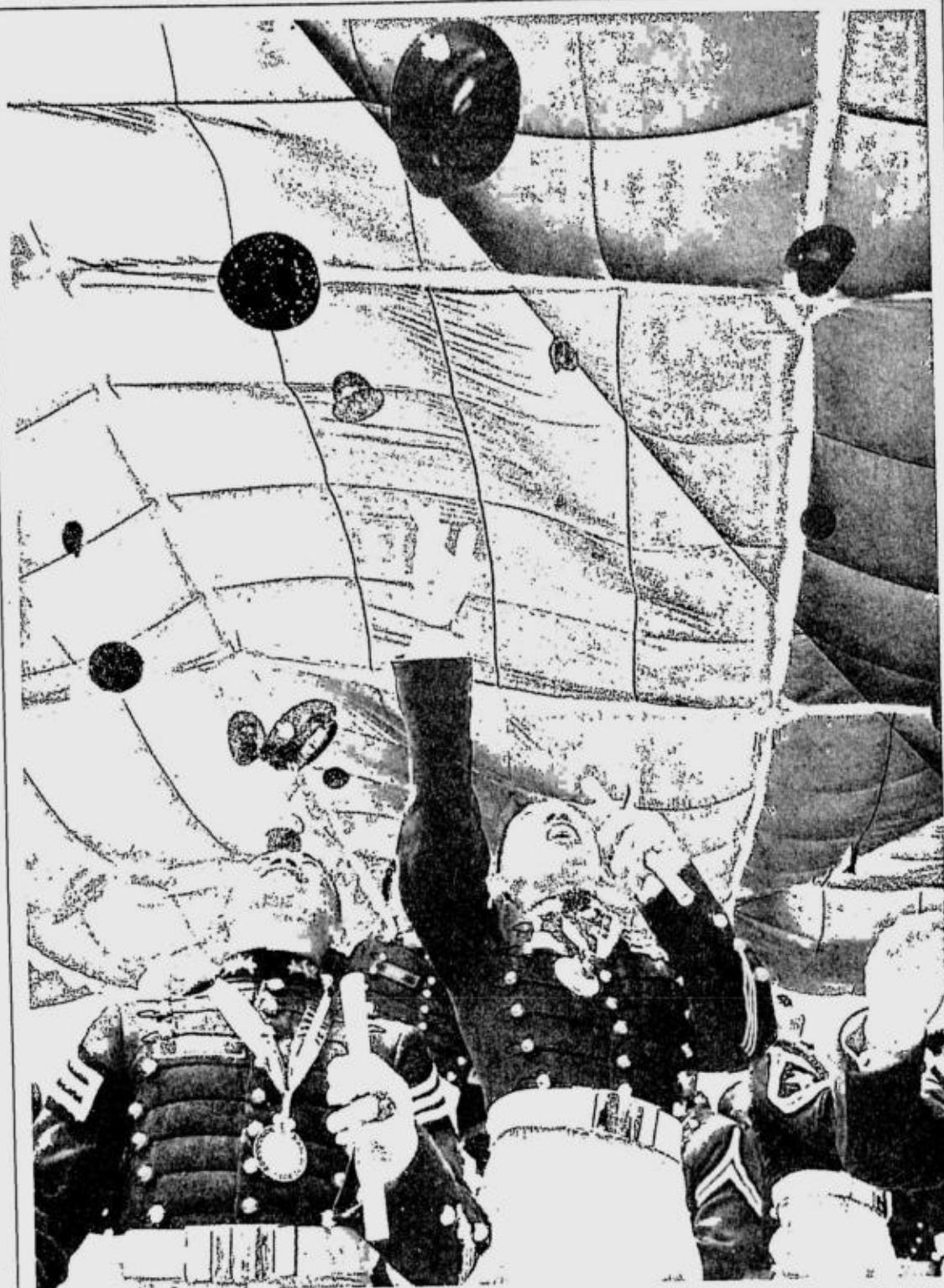
The DA has issued guidelines to farmers and local government officials and agencies on how to help contain the spread of the infestation.

Among the measures being undertaken is the putting up of "light traps" which captures the bugs in funnel-shaped containers by attracting them to bright lights.

The DA has also advised farmers to burn rice straws where the bugs usually stay and lay eggs. After harvest, ricefields should also be immediately plowed and flooded with water to kill the bugs' eggs.

Farmers have also been advised to cancel the third cropping to break the life cycle of the bug.

Toledo said the bugs are resistant to commercial pesticides but can be contained with the use of *maturazzium*, a kind of fungus that kills adult bugs.



HATS OFF
Graduates of the Philippine Military Academy throw their hats into the air during graduation ceremonies at the PMA grounds in Baguio City.

LYN RILLON/PDI PHOTO

Factory spills toxic waste into river

LUCENA CITY—WORKERS FROM THE soap factory that spilled chemical waste into the Alitao River here are racing against time to contain the spread of the toxic by-product.

According to Melvin Fiegalan, staffer of the Quezon DENR-Environment Management Bureau (EMB), the owner of CDK Soap Industry sent plant workers to recover the solidified white and brownish foamy substance floating on the water.

"It seems that the factory owner has initiated his own river clean-up to contain the spread of the water pollution. That's the first move in containing any type of hazardous spillage—clean the

mess and prevent further spread to the unaffected areas," Fiegalan said after inspecting the site Sunday afternoon.

However, the DENR maintained that the effort of William King, the soap factory owner, was still not enough to prevent the flow of liquefied chemical downstream.

"We're afraid that the spread of the chemical has already reached the downstream parts of the river. We're running against time to minimize the environmental damage," he said.

The chemical spillage has already flowed downstream to connect with Iyam River, one of the two main rivers flowing along both sides of the city toward Tayabas Bay.

Fiegalan said the solidified waste had covered at least 50 meters of the Alitao River.

The main cooking tank of the soap factory suffered a leak Friday evening, resulting in the flow of chemical waste into the river.

"The plant owner could have prevented the exit of the chemical waste from the plant compound. But he did not do anything. The damage has been done," said Fiegalan.

The investigating group found that the flow of waste exited from a small channel inside the factory compound leading to the road side canal just outside the plant premises. *Delfin Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Marlon Ramos, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Small miners take up arms to resist crackdown

BAYOMBONG, NUEVA VIZCAYA—Small miners who are conducting gold panning operations in a remote village in upland Kasibut town have taken up arms, in apparent anticipation of a military crackdown against them, a mining official here confirmed on Monday.

Jerrysal Mangaoang, regional director of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau in Cagayan Valley, said concerns over security prompted officials to defer the clearing operation which a multi-sectoral task force was set to launch last month against illegal miners in Didipio village.

Farmers have also been advised to cancel the third cropping to break the life cycle of the bug.

Toledo said the bugs are resistant to commercial pesticides but can be contained with the use of *maturazzium*, a kind of fungus that kills adult bugs.

"We were told of the presence

of armed elements in the area. I suppose these are miners who can afford (to buy firearms)," he said.

The task force was formed last month to curb the rampant small mining in Dinkidi Hill in Didipio, site of the proposed large-scale mining project of Australasian Philippines Mining Inc. (APMI), an Australian company.

Since 1994, APMI, formerly Climax Arimco Mining Corp., has been intending to conduct a large-scale mining operation for gold and copper on Dinkidi Hill. However, it has failed to start operations due to the strong opposition of local

communities.

Mangaoang said they had intended to bring in military and police personnel to drive out about 300 small miners from... he area.

The miners were composed of Didipio villagers and residents from as far as Ifugao and Benguet.

"We'll have to stop them (small-scale miners), then we will secure the area so they can no longer go back," he said.

Local officials have expressed alarm over the haphazard mining being conducted by small miners, who have dug tunnels on Dinkidi Hill and have been open-

ly using explosives for their operations.

The operation has already caused the death of an Ifugao miner due to a dynamite blast in late December 2005.

The gold rush has also attracted villagers as well as strangers, which they blamed for the increase in robbery cases there.

But antimining groups objected to the planned use of soldiers and policemen against the small-scale miners, fearing that the situation "might escalate into a bigger problem."

"Our findings revealed that many of the Didipio people are

not aware of the small-scale mining act, which they can use as an option instead of engaging in something that is illegal," said Sr. Maria Eden Orlino, director of the Church-based Diocesan Social Action Commission here.

Peter Duyapat, a village official, said small miners have trooped to the site following rumors that the APMI was set to start its operations this year.

"They believe that they—not a foreign company—should reap the wealth of their land," he said. *Melvin Gascon, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

ROUNDUP

Suspect in mayor's slay falls

TANDAG, SURIGAO DEL SUR—A former New People's Army (NPA) rebel was arrested after boasting during a drinking spree on Friday about his participation in the 2003 killing of Mayor Joel Brillantes of Monkayo, Compostela Valley. One of his drinking buddies in Barangay Sumo-Sumo, Tago town, immediately informed police about Cirilo Engrava's declaration. Supt. Arthur Sanchez, provincial police deputy director, said Engrava, 41, of Bayabas town, resisted arrest. Police seized from him a .45 cal. pistol. Brillantes was shot and killed inside the Matina cockpit in Davao City. His death was believed to be related to mining operations in Mt. Diwata, where his company still operates.

Bert Pacate, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Fire survivors get shelter

COTABATO CITY—Social welfare officials in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao have turned over 85 core shelters to victims of a fire in Malabang, Lanao del Sur in 2003. The victims live in Barangs Banday and Chinatown, considered among the poorest areas of the town. Samby Salik-Salikwa, administrative and finance division chief of the regional Department of Social Welfare and Development, said other survivors would receive core shelters. Samson Gogo, regional information chief, said the Army's engineering battalion built the housing units. Social Welfare Regional Secretary Ruby Sahali said the units cost P3.4 million.

Jeffrey Maitem and Charlie Señase, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Indian killed in Cavite

CAMP VICENTE LIM, LAGUNA—An Indian businessman was killed when he tried to fight back two suspected robbers in Bacoor, Cavite on Friday night. Cavite police director Senior Supt. Benjardi Mantele said Balbir Singh, 52, of Imus town, was on his way home on a Honda XRM motorcycle at around 7:30 p.m. after collecting money from his loan business when the armed men blocked his path. When the victim refused to give his money, he was shot.

Mantele said residents brought the victim to a nearby hospital where he was declared dead on arrival.

Marlon Ramos, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Summer job for students

LEGAZPI CITY—A total of 1,846 students are expected to benefit from the Special Program for the Employment of Students (SPES) under the Department of Labor and Employment. Labor regional director Alex Maraan said his agency had allotted some P5.9 million to provide summer jobs to students in coordination with local government units and private firms in Bicol. Under the program, 40 percent of the wages of the students will be shouldered by the department and the remainder, by the hiring LGU or business companies. Maraan said the LGUs' Public Employment Services Offices are facilitating the program in their localities.

Edgar Alejo, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Canadian-funded projects

LEGAZPI CITY—Canadian Ambassador Peter Sutherland arrived here March 25 on an inspection visit to Canadian-funded projects in Albay. In Libon, he visited the handicraft-making project of the Del Rosario Handicraft Producers Association which was using locally grown "agas" grass in making handicrafts for export. He also visited the potable water system project of the Malinao Disabled Persons Development Inc. in Barangay Balza, Malinao town. Earlier, Sutherland met with members of the Metro Naga Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Naga City Investment Promotion Board in Naga for possible investment and trade tie-ups.

Edgar Alejo, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Bomb threat at Justice Hall

BATANGAS CITY—Terror gripped the Hall of Justice here on Thursday after an employee of the city prosecutor's office received a bomb threat from an unidentified caller. City police chief Supt. Nilo Anzo said about 300 employees scampered out of the building upon learning of the threat. The Air Force's Explosive Ordnance Division unit from Fernando Air Base in Lipa City was immediately dispatched to check on the supposed bomb planted inside the building. Provincial administrator Ronaldo Geron said such occurrence was common in the Hall of Justice, but Gov. Armando Sanchez ordered stricter implementation of security measures in all government buildings in the province.

Marlon Ramos, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau



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Home of world's largest fish is overfished, says WWF study

By Blanche S. Rivera

DONSOL, HOME OF THE WORLD'S

largest fish, is overfished, according to a study by WWF-Philippines.

The overfishing threatens the

future of around 3,000 municipal fisherfolk and a booming whale shark ecotourism that has made the sleepy town in Sorsogon a world-renowned tourism site, the study said.

The study done by the WWF, a global conservation group, showed that 32.5% of commercially important pelagic fishes like tuna, mackerel and sardines, are overfished in Donsol.

"The fish catch rate is too high that the potential for fish stock to replenish itself over time is getting more difficult," Ruel Pine, head of the WWF Community Based Ecotourism and Coastal Resource Management Project in Donsol, said in statement.

The one-year study on capture fisheries in Donsol was conducted by the WWF in June last year and funded by the USAID.

The whale shark (*Rhincodon typus*) or basking, known to be the largest fish in the world, has attracted tourists who spend up to P7 million a year for guides, boatmen and accommodation.

Revenues from the whale shark interaction, however, is only the third biggest source of income for the municipality where fishing remains the top source of livelihood.

The fishing industry in Donsol nets an annual harvest of 1,350.89 metric tons of mostly scads or galunggong, sardines, mackerel and tuna, but the sector is threatened by the intrusion of commercial fishers in the municipal waters.

Commercial fishers catch around 12,000 metric tons of fish per year, putting pressure on the marine resources of the area, the WWF reported.

"Capture fisheries is now geared toward a condition of economic overfishing. This means that additional investment to the fishing operations doesn't yield additional fish catch or income to small fishers," Pine said.

The WWF has started a fisheries management plan in Donsol to address the problem of overfishing. The WWF helped the local government unit and fishers to draft a municipal fisheries ordinance and toughen up enforcement against illegal fishing in Donsol's waters.

Donsol's fisheries management program is a collaborative effort of stakeholders to ensure food security and the sustainability of ecotourism in the province, the WWF said.

"The management plan and the ordinance will set in place mechanisms that will promote proactive protection and rational exploitation of its coastal resources," Pine added.

Miriam goes on 'indefinite sick leave'

By Philip C. Tubeza

ADMINISTRATION SEN. MIRIAM DEFENSOR-SANTIAGO yesterday went on "indefinite sick leave" after suffering from hypertension and an irregular heart beat since Tuesday last week.

In a letter, the 60-year-old senator informed Senate President Franklin Drilon that her doctor had prescribed that she rest at home and take "a trip abroad" to avoid a possible stroke.

"On doctor's advice, I shall be on indefinite sick leave starting [yesterday]. The doctor diagnosed my symptoms as resulting from irregular heartbeat and hypertension," Santiago said.

"This sick leave is necessary, because in April last year, I suffered an ischemic event (a decrease in the blood supply to an organ or part caused by constriction or obstruction of the blood vessels). To avoid a stroke, the doctor has prescribed home rest, and a possible trip abroad," she added.

Santiago said that if her vote or signature [came] "absolutely necessary for Senate business," she would be "available" at her Quezon City home.

Dennis Legaspi, Santiago's press officer, said the senator suffered from headaches, fever and fluctuating blood pressure after she returned from a trip to her home province of Iloilo last Tuesday.

He said Santiago had a family history of hypertension.

"It's hereditary. The senator eats a balanced diet and does not eat pork but sometimes, this still happens," Legaspi said.

Santiago began resting at her La Vista Subdivision home yesterday but her blood pressure continued to fluctuate, he said.

Although no foreign trip had been scheduled yet, the senator usually visits Hong Kong during the Holy Week, he added.

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ECONOMY



WHAT'S INSIDE

- Navotas fishermen take time off for banca race /A16
- Manila gives 'Big Three' 7 years to relocate oil depot /A16

Mercury rises; school still closed

US experts' help sought

By Jocelyn R. Uy

SUMMER HAS TURNED THE ST. Andrew's School in Parañaque into a "hot spot."

The latest air analysis test showed that the mercury level in the school has risen further with the onset of the warm season.

Dr. Olga Virtusio, head of the City Health Office, yesterday said one of two classrooms in the school, where some students were exposed to mercury, continued to register high levels of the chemical, "way beyond the habituation level for children."

She added that the cleanup carried out by a private company was not thorough enough to get rid of "beads" of mercury in the two classrooms.

"These beads were vaporized due to the hot climate and this caused the mercury level to rise," she told the INQUIRER yesterday.

Virtusio did not say what the mercury level in the school was, although previous tests had pegged it at above the threshold of two micrograms per cubic meter, which is considered toxic to humans.

The air analysis test was conducted last Saturday by the Inter-Agency Committee on Environ-

mental and Health, a coalition formed by the Department of Health, Virtusio added. She said that they were trying to seek the help of US experts in performing another round of analysis and cleanup. "This [process] has been delegated to an outside agency because the government has no capability to do it," the city health officer said.

Around 80 students were exposed to mercury on Feb. 16 during a science class. Thirteen were later hospitalized for symptoms of chemical exposure, prompting St. Andrew's officials to close the school indefinitely on Feb. 20.

Graduating students of the school held classes at the nearby St. Paul's College until March 15. Those who were not graduating were placed on a home study program. Yesterday, they returned to the classroom, although not at St. Andrew's, but at St. Paul's.

"Since classes at St. Paul's College ended last Friday, our students could now occupy its classrooms for the meantime," said Estrellita Nery, St. Andrew's principal. "All students from nursery, kinder, preschool, Grade 1 to Grade 5 and freshmen to juniors came back to school yesterday," she added.

Kidnap suspect held for holding boy in cockpit

By Jocelyn R. Uy

A MAN WAS ARRESTED yesterday after he allegedly kidnapped a four-year-old boy in Parañaque City.

Chief Insp. Enrique Sy of the Police Community Precinct-3 said the suspect, Ruben Basario, and a companion, allegedly lured the boy into joining them by offering him candy and a bottle of pop.

Sy said the child was playing with his two cousins outside their house at Upper Bicutan, PNR Site, Barangay San Martin de Porres at 3 p.m. yesterday when the suspects approached them.

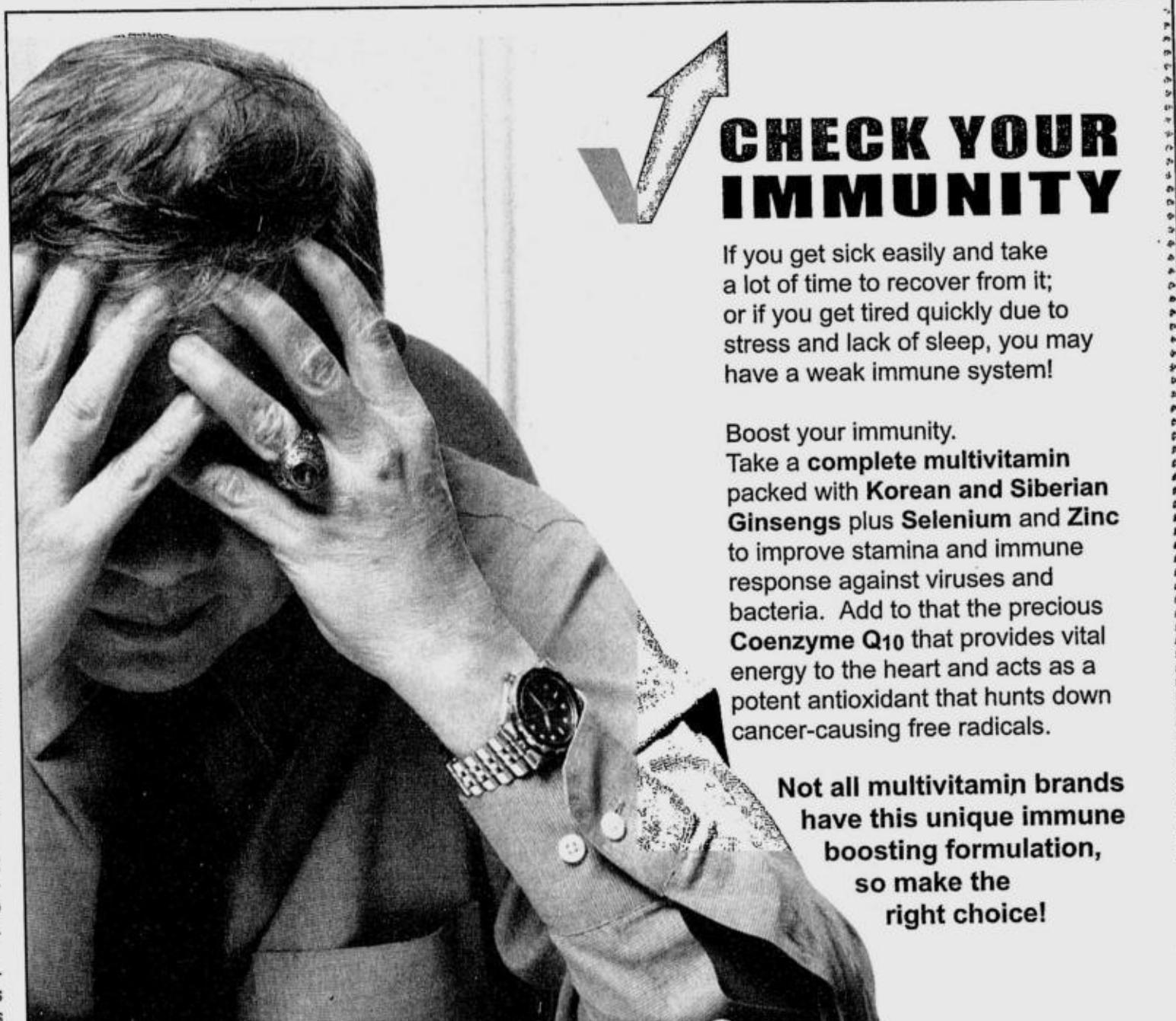
"The suspects allegedly asked

the three children to help them look for a cockpit in the area. Only the four-year-old boy agreed," said Sy.

Neighbors who saw the incident immediately alerted the police and the Philippine National Construction Corp.

Police were able to find Basario and the child in a cockpit on PNR Site, Barangay Tanyag, Taguig City—500 meters away from the victim's home—an hour after the incident. Basario's companion was able to elude escape.

The suspect has denied kidnapping the boy, adding that the child just accompanied him to the cockpit.



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'Big 3' given 7 years to find new home

By Tina G. Santos

THE CITY OF MANILA HAS GIVEN the so-called "Big Three" oil companies seven years to relocate their depot in Pandacan.

Councilor Lourdes "Bonjay" Isip-Garcia, who authored the ordinance reclassifying the area where the oil depot is located, said Caltex, Shell and Petron would have to move out by 2013.

The Manila Comprehensive Land Use Plan and Zoning Ordinance of 2005 calls for the area's reclassification from industrial to commercial/residential. As a result, the oil depot would no longer be allowed to operate in Pandacan.

The ordinance has already been passed by the City Council and is just awaiting the approval of Mayor Lito Atienza.

But in an earlier interview, Atien-

za said that he would immediately sign the ordinance changing the area's classification from industrial.

"I will sign it at once, oil firms would really have to relocate because of potential and imminent dangers that threaten both the safety and health of our people," he said.

Calls for the closure of the oil depot were renewed after gasoline overflowed from a storage tank of Caltex last Thursday. Although officials said that the problem was contained immediately, the incident caused residents to panic.

Atienza added the oil firms could relocate the depot to a reclamation area in Tondo.

"We're not ejecting them altogether, they can still operate within Manila but only in a place where they could not pose danger to the public," the mayor said, adding that

another oil company is already operating in the area.

Isip-Garcia, however, said that under the new ordinance, the reclamation area would be considered a light industrial area.

"They (oil companies) can no longer operate within the city," Isip-Garcia told INQUIRER. "The oil company now operating in the area... also has to move out in seven years. (Depot operations) are considered heavy industrial, so it's still not suitable there."

She said she will file a resolution creating a committee that would investigate Thursday's oil overflow incident.

"Oil companies should submit a complete report on the incident to pinpoint the cause of the gasoline overflow," Isip-Garcia said, adding that the committee will be composed of city police and fire officials.

Alternative routes planned for SLEX rehab project

By Jocelyn R. Uy

ALTERNATIVE ROUTES WILL BE mapped out once the South Luzon Tollway Corp. begins the rehabilitation and expansion of the Alabang Viaduct and the South Luzon Expressway (SLEX).

Vic Navarro, Muntinlupa City engineering office head, told the Inquirer yesterday said the company has already begun clearing operations in preparation for the rehabilitation of the expressway.

All structures such as concrete barriers, center islands and islands would be removed, he added.

Navarro said they have given SLTC a one-month deadline to finish the clearing operations to prevent the worsening of traffic at the Alabang Interchange.

The city's traffic management bureau would also put up a "tempo-

rary flexible barricade" on affected streets to ensure the smooth flow of traffic, Navarro added.

Once the rehabilitation of the SLEX and the 30-year old viaduct starts, repair work in areas not prone to traffic would be carried out on a 24-hour basis, and only at nighttime along major thoroughfares.

The southbound lane of the Alabang Viaduct would be closed to traffic. Motorists would have to take Bunye Street toward Alabang-Zapote Road, left to Filinvest Avenue and exit to the Filinvest tollway.

The northbound lane, on the other hand, would remain open to help ease traffic flow.

"The Philippine National Construction Corp. has yet to present to us the rerouting plan once the northbound lane of the viaduct begins," Tez Navarro of the city's Pub-

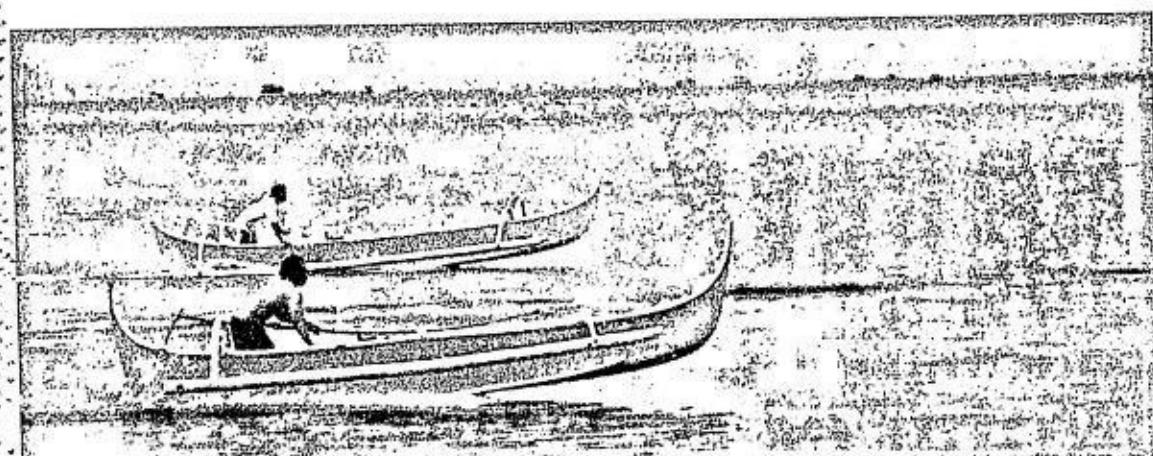
lic Information Office said.

The rehabilitation of the viaduct's southbound lane is expected to take at least six to eight months.

Muntinlupa Mayor Jaime Fresnedi, meanwhile, welcomed the expansion of the viaduct from six to eight lanes, saying it would improve its volume capacity and structural integrity.

He also hoped that the project will decongest traffic in the city, making it more conducive for trade and commerce.

Transportation Secretary Leandro Mendoza has emphasized the need to rehabilitate and upgrade the SLEX, considering that it services one million passengers and 150,000 vehicles daily. Sixty percent of cargo bound for airports and piers also pass through the expressway.



NAVOTAS fisherman race in their bancas at the centennial park, a yearly event to celebrate Fishermen's Month.

RANDY HORMILLOSA

Boat race draws out Navotas fishermen

By Nancy C. Carvajal

THIRTY FISHERMEN IN NAVOTAS brought out their newly-painted motorized bancas recently to join a boat race highlighting a week-long festival in their honor.

"Although the number of local fishermen who fish in the coastal waters of Navotas has dwindled, participants in the race have increased," said Ferdie Casakit a long time organizer of the boat race.

The races have been a tradition in the fishing town since 1997.

Casakit said a former member of the city council, Reynaldo Ablola, who used to be a fisherman, had proposed the holding of

the festival to pay tribute to the backbone of the town's main industry, fishing.

The March 17 race, which started at 9 a.m. and ended at 3 p.m., is a big event for townsfolk who fish for a living, although fish in the coastal waters had become increasingly scarce, Casakit said.

Contestants spruce up their boats and practice for the race days before the event," he added.

As a precaution, participants also train an extra hand to hold out in case the engines conk out.

Contestants set out from waters approximately five feet deep, turn in the direction of

Barangay Tangos, and then proceed to the town's coastal centennial park.

Cheering spectators egged on their favorite racers as they watched the race in progress from the starting point along Barangay Navotas West.

The area also serves as a pier for small fishing boats during the rainy season.

The race was classified into three categories: Class A for boats with waterlines of not less than 16 feet, Class B for slower boats, and class C for fast boats.

Winners for each category received a cash prize of P10,000 for the first placer, and P5,000 and P3,000 for second and third prize winners, respectively.

Ex-soldier arrested for lobbing grenade

By Tarra V. Quismundo

A FORMER SOLDIER WAS ARRESTED yesterday after he threw a grenade at a group of men, one of them his relative, in Makati City.

Fernando Colimas, 34, now faces charges of attempted murder, resisting arrest, alarm and scandal, and illegal possession of an explosive.

His distant cousin, Noli Lagunero, 31, was taken to the hospital for treatment after he sustained injuries to his foot as a result of the explosion.

According to the police, Lagunero and two other men were drinking at 8:45 a.m. yesterday

inside a compound on Calachuchi Street in Barangay Pembo, Makati City, when Colimas, his neighbor, passed by.

The group offered Colimas a drink which he accepted.

Case investigator PO3 Jeson Vigilla said as the group was drinking, Colimas got irked when Lagunero stared at the hand grenade in his pocket.

The suspect then allegedly picked a fight with Lagunero, at one point even threatening to burn him alive.

Vigilla said the suspect left the scene, only to return after a few minutes to lob a grenade at the three men. Lagunero and the other

men, however, were able to run away although he was hit by shrapnel in the foot.

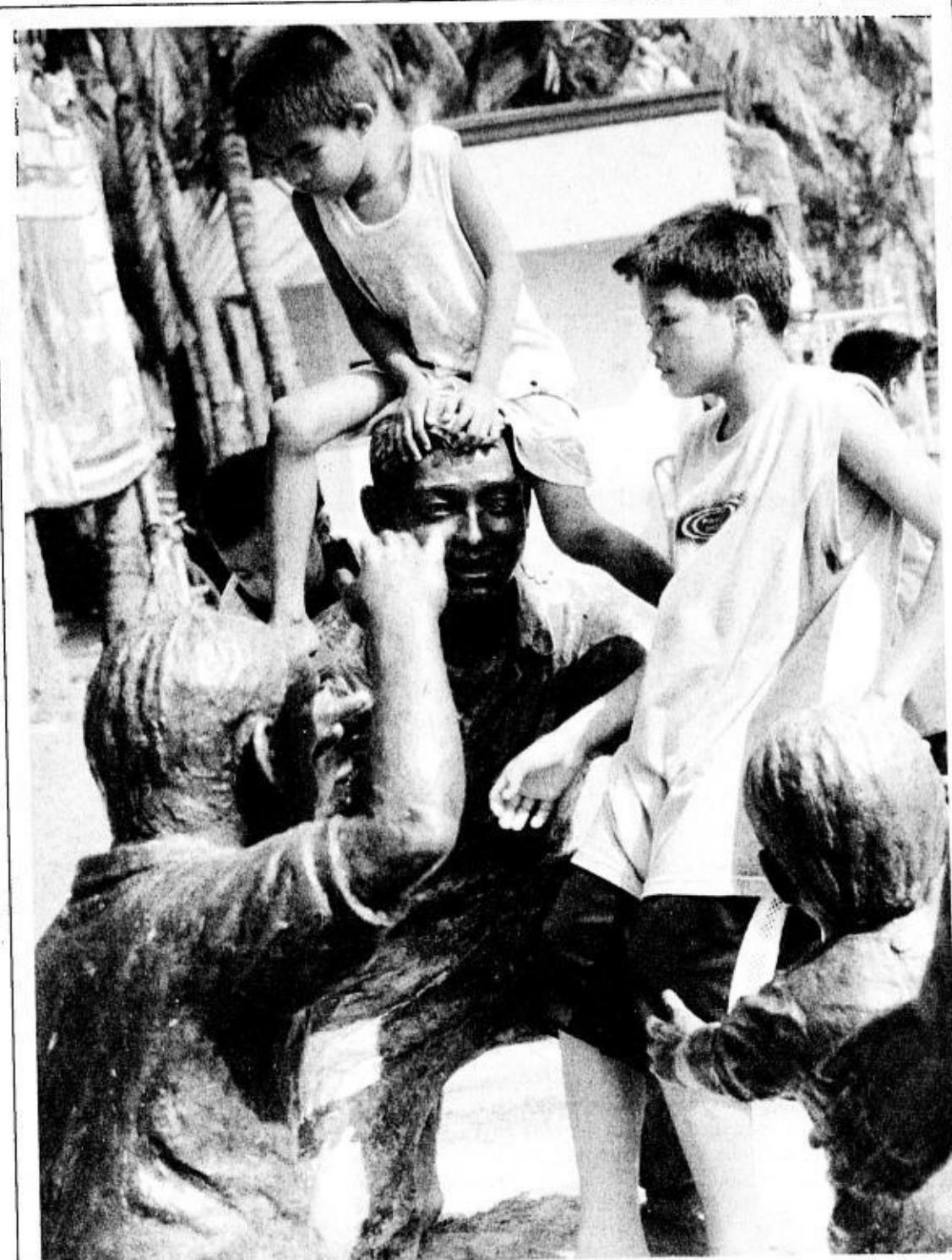
Colimas, on the other hand, barricaded himself in his house.

Makati policemen who went to the scene tried to get him to surrender but he refused.

A Special Weapons and Tactics team was called in but when the former soldier still refused to surrender, they barged into his house and took him into custody.

Colimas was later taken to the Makati Central Police Station.

The SWAT team, meanwhile, found another hand grenade in his house.



KIDS' PLAY
Children horse around with sculpted figures in a public park in Manila. With classes over, they must find ways to amuse themselves during the summer break.

APP

Right choice for antismuggling unit

IT'S QUEZON CITY MAYOR SONNY Belmonte's right not to allow gambling in his city.

But if that kind of gambling—the Small Town Lottery (STL)—is sanctioned by the national government, can the mayor order the arrest of what he perceives are violators?

That's what Quezon City cops did to a licensed STL operator in the city, the Benchmark Acquisition International Corp.

Among those arrested were employees of the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO) that gave the license to Benchmark.

Benchmark claims it was allowed by the city council to operate. In fact, the firm said it had paid the city government its share in the numbers game.

The STL, managed by the PCSO, is the government's answer to the eradication of illegal jueteng.

It is the same as jueteng, and only differs in name. The STL also uses the same collectors called cabos (supervisors) used in jueteng.

My sources at the piers say agents of the police's Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) assigned to go after smugglers are not doing their job.

A container van full of top-of-the-line cellular phones that came out of the piers was apprehended Friday by CIDG agents, according to my spies.

The shipment was declared as cheap goods, and so the broker allegedly paid only minimal duties for it.

The cargo was released after the broker allegedly paid off two CIDG officers to the tune of P300,000, my sources said.

By the way, this broker is identified with Sen. Jinggoy Estrada, according to my sources.

METRO BRIEFS

One bullet, two deaths

THE ALLEGED killer fired just one shot from his home-made gun but two people were killed. The bullet hit Gerardo de Guzman and Gemalyn Soliven while they were

standing in front of a sari-sari store in Marikina City on Sunday night.

The man who fired the gun, Narciso Cruz, 32, escaped after the incident. Senior Insp. Edgardo Atendido said De Guzman and Soliven were in front of a sari-sari store in Barangay Malanday at about 8 p.m. on Sunday when Cruz passed by. Cruz, the police said, had been nursing an old grudge against De Guzman. The suspect went to his house, only to return minutes later, carrying a homemade shotgun, witnesses told the police.

Cruz then shot De Guzman once in the head at close range. But the bullet exited the victim's head and also hit Soliven in the stomach, Atendido said. Bystanders

brought the victims to the Aman Rodriguez Medical Center but both were declared dead on arrival. Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

Immoral but not illegal

A NATIONAL Bureau of Investigation (NBI) official said that Indian traders involved in small-scale lending businesses, also known as the "5-6" lending scheme, were not violating the law. "We can say that their lending activities are immoral because they are essentially taking advantage of small-time Filipino businessmen. But what

they are doing is not illegal because they are not violating any law against the 5-6 scheme," said NBI National Capital Region chief Ruel Lasala. He explained that since the anti-usury law which prescribed ceilings on lending rates has already been repealed, local and foreign business

men could not be arrested for engaging in such loan schemes.

"What the two parties agreed upon would prevail because it would appear that it was voluntary on the part of the borrower," Lasala

explained. The government previously imposed a cap on loan rates under the Anti-Usury Law, but this was repealed years ago when foreign exchange controls were liberalized.

Margaux C. Ortiz

Sound engineer files suit

THE SAGA of audio engineer Jonathan Tiengco's legal battles against the media opened another chapter yesterday after he slapped libel charges against four news organizations, including the INQUIRER. He filed five counts of libel against officers, reporters and editors of the INQUIRER, the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, ABS-CBN and Manila Times over the publication of stories accusing him of harassing PCIJ. Tiengco, the sound expert presented by Michael Defensor to question the authenticity of the "Hello Garci" wiretap, said the media groups defamed him when they reported on PCIJ executive director Sheila Coronel's Senate testimony accusing him of harassment and calling him "crazy." He said Coronel falsely told a Senate hearing on March 14 that he had applied but failed to get a search warrant on the PCIJ from two Quezon City courts in relation to inciting to sedition charges. Coronel also alleged that Tiengco and his wife were "harassing" PCIJ by filing several libel cases against them, and quoted Defensor as saying Tiengco was "crazy." In a six-page complaint before the Quezon City prosecutor's office, Tiengco said Coronel's statements constituted libel, which in turn was broadcast or printed in TV and newspaper reports.

DJ Yap

Free cleft lip/palate surgery
SMILE Train USA, a US-based foundation which has been helping children born with a cleft lip and palate, is set to operate on 250 Filipino kids in coordination with the Philippine Band of Mercy. For more information on how to avail of cleft surgery, please contact the PBM cleft surgeries, please contact the PBM at 815 Remedios Street in Malate, Manila. You can also call 4042516 to 18 or send a text message to 0917-9624162.

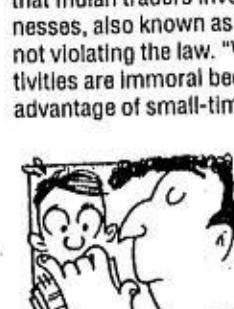


ILLUSTRATION: STEPH BRAVO

for engaging in such loan schemes. "What the two parties agreed upon would prevail because it would appear that it was voluntary on the part of the borrower," Lasala

Immigration debate heating up in US Senate

WASHINGTON—FOUNDED BY immigrants and praised as a haven for the oppressed, the United States now is struggling to decide the fate of as many as 12 million people living in the country illegally.

The Senate takes up the emotional debate on the heels of weekend rallies that drew hundreds of thousands of people protesting attempts to toughen laws against immigrants. Among the election-year proposals that President George W. Bush and members of Congress are considering:

- Erecting a fence on the Mexico border to deter illegal immigration.
- Treating people who sneak across the border as felons to be deported.
- Allowing foreigners to stay in the country legally as custodians, dish washers, construction workers and other low-paid employees.
- Allowing those working in

the US a path to citizenship.

• Requiring them to get in line behind everyone else back in their home countries who want to become Americans.

Senate aides met into the evening Sunday in advance of a Senate Judiciary Committee meeting to debate legislation, but there was no evidence of a breakthrough on the issue most in dispute.

Lawmakers have been divided on whether illegal immigrants should be required to return to their home country before they become eligible for US citizenship.

For his part, Bush arranged to attend a Monday naturalization ceremony for 30 new citizens at Constitution Hall, a few blocks from the White House.

And demonstrations are planned near the Capitol, including a prayer service with immigration advocates and clergy who plan to wear handcuffs to demon-

strate the criminalization of immigration violations.

Bush is going to Mexico this week for a meeting with the leaders of Mexico and Canada. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said Sunday it's important that Mexico "recognize the importance of defense of the borders and of American laws."

Protests raged across the country over the weekend, led by more than 500,000 people who marched through downtown Los Angeles on Saturday in one of the largest demonstrations for any cause in recent US history. Marchers also took to the streets in Phoenix, Milwaukee, Dallas and Columbus, Ohio.

Protests continued Sunday, when nearly 3,000 people, many wrapped in Mexican flags, rallied at the Ohio Statehouse in Columbus and an estimated 3,500 United Farm Workers

members and their supporters protested in Los Angeles.

The president, working hand-in-hand with the business community that relies on cheap labor, is pressuring Congress to allow immigrants to stay in the country legally if they take a job that Americans are unwilling to do.

Judiciary chair Arlen Specter, a Pennsylvania Republican, also supports the idea and has vowed that his committee will advance a bill to the full Senate on Monday, even if they have to work "very, very late into the night."

"If they're prepared to work to become American citizens in the long line traditionally of immigrants who have helped make this country, we can have both a nation of laws and a welcoming nation of workers who do some very, very important jobs for our economy," Specter said Sunday on ABC's "This Week."

AS THE US SENATE WRESTLES with the fate of illegal immigrants living in the United States, they can expect to do so against a backdrop of thousands of demonstrators.

Rallies by immigrants around the country have attracted crowds that have astonished even their organizers. More than a half-million demonstrators marched in Los Angeles on Saturday, as many as 300,000 in Chicago on March 10, and tens of thousands in Denver, Phoenix, Milwaukee and smaller cities.

The demonstrations embody a surging constituency for an overhaul of immigration laws that is being pressed

as never before by immigrants, who were long thought too fearful of deportation to risk so public a display.

The Pew Hispanic Center estimates that of more than 11 million illegal immigrants, 78 percent are from Mexico or other Latin American countries. Many have children and other relatives who are US citizens. Under a House proposal, such family members, like other American citizens including clergy, social workers and lawyers, would risk up to five years in prison if they helped an undocumented immigrant remain in the United States.

NYT

Germans most brainy Europeans

LONDON—GERMANS ARE THE most intelligent people in Europe, well ahead of the British (in eighth place) and the French (15th), according to a new study by Northern Ireland's University of Ulster, The Times reported Monday.

With an average intelligence quotient (IQ) of 107, a scintilla of brainpower above the Dutch who also scored 107, the Polish (106), the Swedish (104) and the Italians (102).

They all came out better in the intelligence stakes than the British who rated an even 100 IQ according to the study, ahead of the Spanish (98) and the French (94) who could only comfort themselves by checking the study results for Bulgarians, Romanians, the Turkish and Serbians who languished at the bottom of the table on 89.

Professor Richard Lynn, who headed the study, caused controversy last year by claiming that men were more intelligent than women by about five IQ points on average.

He said of his latest findings that populations in the colder, more challenging environments of Northern Europe had developed larger brains than those in warmer climates further south.

The average brain size in Northern and Central Europe is 1,320cc and in southeast Europe it is 1,312cc, according to his studies.

He ascribes the differences between British and French intelligence levels to the results of military conflict. He described it as "a hitherto unrecognized law of history" that "the side with the higher IQ normally wins, unless they are hugely outnumbered, as Germany was after 1942," The Times reported.

AFP



FIERCE LOVE

Two African lions roar while mating in Kenya's Maasai Mara game reserve March 23. The lions' mating take place at most times of the year when the dominant male and the female in heat leave the pride and mate every 15-30 minutes for several days in a row.

REUTERS

Blair says he was wrong to announce plan to quit

CANBERRA—BRITISH PRIME Minister Tony Blair caused a stir back home Monday after suggesting he may have made a mistake by stating publicly that he would not stand for a fourth term in office.

Blair's remarks—pounced upon by British journalists traveling with him on his Asia-Pacific tour—were made in an interview with Australian Broadcasting Corporation radio.

The 52-year-old politician was asked specifically if the announcement was a "strategic mistake," given that it fuels speculation he will step down sooner every time either he or his governing Labour Party face controversy.

He told ABC radio there would always be calls for a change of leadership when a prime minister reaches his third term and nearly

10 years in office.

"You just get on with the job because this speculation, I think, probably would happen whatever decision you take," he said.

"Now, it was an unusual thing for me to say but people kept asking me the question so I decided to answer it. Maybe that was a mistake," he said.

The remark featured prominently in television news bulletins in London, prompting Blair's official spokesperson to offer clarification that he had been cut off by the interviewer's follow-up question.

"If he hadn't been interrupted, what he was going to say was that his mistake was the hope that it (the public comment about stepping down) would kill the speculation about his future," the spokesperson said.

AP

Asians in Dubai cry for rights

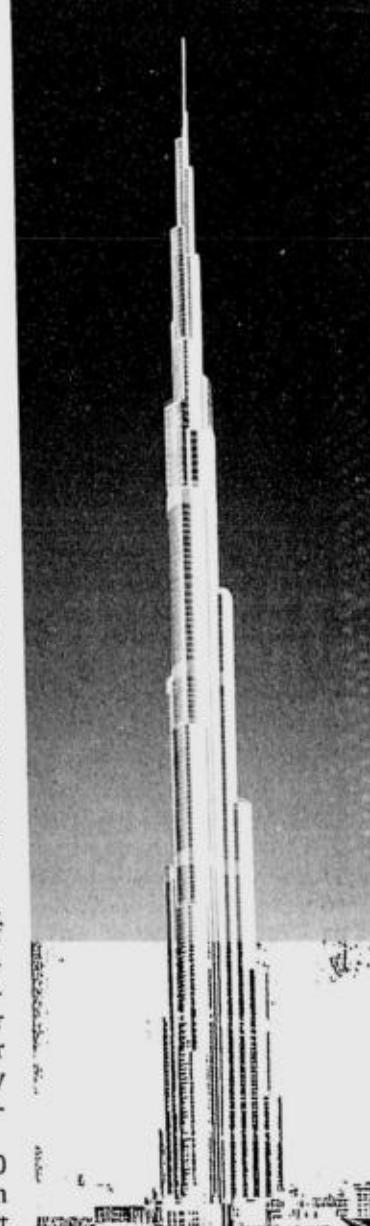
DUBAI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES—When hundreds of workers angered by low salaries and mistreatment rioted Tuesday night at the site of what is to become the world's tallest skyscraper, not only were they expressing the growing frustration of Asian migrants here, they offered a glimpse of an increasingly organized labor force.

Of the 1.5 million residents of Dubai, as many as a million are immigrants who have come here to work, with the largest subgroup being construction workers, said Hadi Ghaemi, a researcher with Human Rights Watch who covers the United Arab Emirates, citing government statistics. The vast majority of the immigrants come from the Indian subcontinent and the Philippines.

With the cost of living rising, many have abandoned dreams of returning with a fortune. The construction workers' camps, in particular, have been set up ever deeper in the desert. That adds an hour or two just to get to the job site every morning, in addition to the workers' 12-hour shifts.

Since September, when 800 workers staged a protest march down a main highway in the heart of the city and set off a national debate about the treatment of foreign workers, laborers have held at least eight major strikes to demand their rights and get their pay.

AP



ARTIST impression of Burj Khalifa, a \$20-billion project, the tallest building to be in the world. REUTER

Thai opposition refuses Thaksin's coalition offer

BANGKOK, THAILAND—OPPONENTS of Thailand's embattled Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra on Monday rejected his offer to include them in a new government if he is reelected, heightening political tensions less than a week before national elections.

"The opposition will not play Thaksin's game. Thaksin's proposal for a national government is only a political ploy," Somsak Prisana-Anantakul, deputy leader of the opposition Chart Thai party told reporters. His comments were echoed

by the main opposition Democrat Party.

Thailand's three main opposition parties are boycotting Sunday's snap elections, called by Thaksin to defuse growing antigovernment protests that have been launched almost daily for several weeks.

The rallies have failed to shake Thaksin's resolve to stay in power. In a surprise move Sunday night, Thaksin appeared to offer a compromise to his critics, saying he would include them in a new government if he wins the election.

"I plan to form the national government after the election, and I am pleased to offer Cabinet positions to Democrat and Chart Thai parties in my government as part of an effort to join hands and cooperate in making political reforms," Thaksin told supporters on the outskirts of Bangkok.

Thaksin's comments came after weekend rallies in Bangkok that drew tens of thousands of protesters.

Protest organizers on Saturday called on King Bhumibol Adulyadej

to intervene in the political crisis and appoint an interim government.

Abhisit Vejjajiva, leader of the Democrat Party, said Monday the opposition was pushing ahead with its mission to see an interim government installed—and would not accept Thaksin's invitation for the opposition to join his government.

"The formula of an interim government is totally different from Thaksin's proposal for a national government," Abhisit Vejjajiva leader of main opposition Democrat party said.

With the cost of living rising, many have abandoned dreams of returning with a fortune. The construction workers' camps, in particular, have been set up ever deeper in the desert. That adds an hour or two just to get to the job site every morning, in addition to the workers' 12-hour shifts.

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AP

Poll puts 'Orange' rivals back into each other's arms

KIEV—UKRAINE'S PARLIAMENTARY elections have dealt a humiliating personal blow to President Viktor Yushchenko but are likely to push his splintered "orange revolution" team back together, analysts said Monday.

Yushchenko was beaten in a national election both by the man he defeated in the "orange revolution" contest a little over a year ago, and by the woman he fired as premier six months ago, according to the exit polls.

The president's Our Ukraine bloc received just 16 percent of the vote, compared to 31 percent for Viktor Yanukovych's Regions Party and 24 percent for Yulia Tymoshenko's bloc, the pollsters estimated.

The first official results were expected at about 0600 GMT Monday, with final results taking "at least a week" according to election commission representative Marina Stavnicik, quoted by the Russian Itar-Tass news agency.

"The results are the Ukrainian population's evaluation of ... (Yushchenko's) first year in office. They have given their mandate to his opponents," said Kost Bondarenko, a political analyst in Kiev.

Yushchenko was swept into power after the 2004 "orange revolution" street protests over a contested presidential ballot, amid which the nation's supreme court threw out the results that initially handed victory to Yanukovych.

The then-opposition leader easily won a rerun ballot but his popularity has plummeted as the economy slumped and the "orange" team splintered amid infighting.

The president's apparent poor showing in Sunday's poll will push him towards a coalition with Tymoshenko, analysts agreed early Monday, while officials from the two parties suggested an agreement could be signed later in the day.

"The most probable coalition will be orange ... the Region Party's victory is only a formal one," said Volodymyr Fesenko, an independent analyst.

Said Bondarenko: "This is a blow for Yushchenko, but not defeat."

Tymoshenko too downplayed the Regions' victory, yet to be confirmed officially, saying an orange coalition would relegate Yanukovych's party to an opposition role in the new parliament.

"This is absolutely okay. The country needs a strong opposition," Tymoshenko said in early morning television remarks.

Tymoshenko looks set to regain the premiership in a coalition with Our Ukraine.

"Our Ukraine has agreed on the position that the force that gets the most votes ... will propose its candidacy for the prime minister's post," said Roman Bezsmertnyi, campaign chief for Our Ukraine.

When asked what would happen

if Yushchenko refused her candidacy for the premiership, Tymoshenko said in televised comments: "He would have to agree to the premiership of (Viktor) Yanukovych."

Such a coalition would allow Yushchenko to continue reforms aimed at driving Ukraine toward membership in the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (Nato), analysts said.

But an alliance between the president and his erstwhile "orange" partner is likely to be a tense one, as the ambitious Tymoshenko and measured Yushchenko are likely to spar on several issues, analysts say.

AFP



TYMOSHENKO

REUTERS

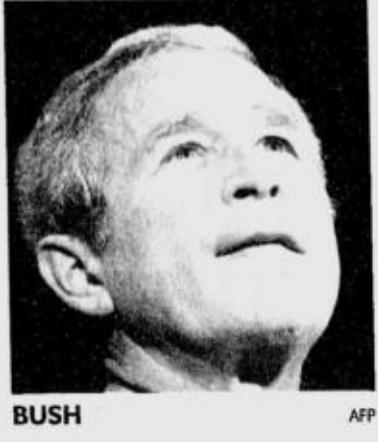
The WORLD

Editor Luverne B. Gueco

Iraq war sealed months before invasion

LONDON—IN THE WEEKS BEFORE THE US-LED invasion of Iraq, as the United States and Britain pressed for a second UN resolution condemning Iraq, President Bush's public ultimatum to Saddam Hussein was blunt: Disarm or face war.

But behind closed doors, the president was certain that war was inevitable. During a private two-hour meeting in the Oval Office on Jan. 31, 2003, he made it clear to Prime Minister Tony Blair of Britain that he was determined



BUSH

by The New York Times.

"Our diplomatic strategy had to be arranged around the military planning," David Manning, Blair's chief foreign policy adviser at the time, wrote in the memo that summarized the discussion between Bush, Blair and six of their top aides.

"The start date for the military campaign was now penciled in for 10 March," Manning wrote, paraphrasing the president. "This was when the bombing would begin."

Although the United States and Britain aggressively sought a second UN resolution against Iraq—which they failed to obtain—the president said repeatedly that he did not believe he needed it for an invasion.

Stamped "extremely sensitive," the five-page memorandum, which was circulated among a handful of Blair's most senior aides, had not been made public. Several highlights were first published in January in the book "Lawless World," which was

written by a British lawyer and international law professor, Philippe Sands. In early February, Channel 4 in London first broadcast several excerpts from the memo.

Since then, The New York Times has reviewed the five-page memo in its entirety. While the president's sentiments about invading Iraq were known at the time, the previously unreported material offers an unfiltered view of two leaders on the brink of war, yet supremely confident. **NYT**

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March 31, Friday

Ribbon Cutting (Gen. Generoso Senga* • Generals' Wives* • Mayor Sigfrido Tinga with Mrs. Tinga* • Mayor Rosendo Capco with Mrs. Capco* • Marissa Concepcion) • National Anthem • Invocation • Go Negosyo Music Video • Opening Remarks (Jose Ma. Concepcion III) • Businessman Manic Manaoag (Leo Martinez) • Intro of Program and Interactive Sessions by Host (Carelle Mangaliag) • Forum 1: "MicroNegosyo, Kapangyarihan ng Kababahan" (Moderator - Karen Davila, Panelists: Mina Gabor* • Jolina Magdangal* • Conye Reyes* • Cory Quirino* • Myrna Yau (NCRFW) • Chit Juan (Figaro) • Cheese Ledesma (The Big Chil) • Jeanne Bañez (Balut Eggspress) • Rachel Alejandro (Sexy Chef) • Merle Alferez (MSA)*, Alternate Panelist: Myla Villanueva) • Forum 2: "Posibleng Negosyo, Anong Babagay Sa 'yo?" (Moderator - Karen Davila, Panelists: Vina Morales* • Diether Ocampo* • Kuh Ledesma* • Les Reyes (Reyes Haircutters) • Ritchie Cuna (Forgelet) • Rowena Villegas (Wynski) • Roy Chua (PAGASA) • Agnes Car (Women Inventors Assoc. of the Phils., Inc.) • Testimony: "Ang Balansayadong Buhay: Pamilya't Negosyo" (Maricel Laxa) • GAME SHOW with Small Businesses as Prizes • Makatang Nonoy: Isang Tula Handog sa Kababahan (Ony Carmago) • Forum 3: "Perang Pangnegosyo, Saan Ka Nga Ba Tatakbo?" (Moderator - Lyn Ching, Panelists: AFPMBAI (Ma. Corazon Dabao) • AFPSLAI • NLSF (c/o Dennis Hamto) • People's Credit and Finance Corporation* • Bayan Foundation (c/o Irma Cosico) • BPI (Ma. Teresa Reyes) • Planters Development Bank (c/o Trixie Pagula) • First Macro Bank (Rafael Serrano) • PSBank (Derick Rasalan) • Phil. Youth Business Foundation (John Walter Baybay)*) • Testimony: "Pagnenegosyo Kasama ang Kapuso't Kapamilya" (Anthony Pangilinan) • Talk: "Kalayaan sa Kapakusan" (Francisco Colayco) • Forum 4: "Radyo Negosyo: Mga Payo at Gabay sa Tagumpay" (Moderators - Anna Periquet and Carl Balita, Panelists: Arnel Ignacio* • Maoi Arroyo • Rommel Juan (Binalot) • Doyee Tumpalan (First Quadrant) • Ricardo Collantes (Kookai's) • Gov. Ray Villafuerte (Lara's)* • Johnlu Koa (French Baker) • Sandy Javier (Andok's) • Jay Aldeguer (Island Souvenirs)*) • Sum Up / Final Interactive Activity by Host

April 1, Saturday

Skills Demo/Training by DOST, Reyes Haircutters, Le Cordon Bleu, TESDA and TLRC • Skills Demo/Training by DOST, Reyes Haircutters, Le Cordon Bleu, TESDA and TLRC • Polvoron and Pastillas Making by Laura Lazaro (WIAPI) • Paper Tole by Shirley Fabros (Approtech Asia) • Meat Processing and Dimsum Making c/o Approtech Asia • Tomato-Based Products c/o Approtech Asia • Preserved Sampaloc and Tea Making by Rita Ritz (WIAPI) • Cellphone Repair c/o Approtech Asia • Basic Haircutting • Cooking and Food Preparation Demo • Sessions on Starting a Business • How to Start a Franchise Business c/o Association of Filipino Franchisers, Inc. • "Food Kalnan: Gourmet Para Sa Masa" c/o Le Cordon Bleu • How to Start a Food Cart Business c/o Food Cart Association of the Philippines • How to Start a Salon/Barbershop c/o Reyes Haircutters • How to Start a Home Spa Business • Business Mentoring Booth Mentoring from 11am to 4pm c/o Anna Periquet • Final list for confirmation

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SPORTS

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■ **Cavs nip
Rockets; Pacers
stop 76ers** /A20
■ **DHL Amateur
Open fires off** /A20



WHAT'S INSIDE
■ **Maria, Amelie
down rivals** /A21
■ **Ames wins, takes
vacation** /A21



PEPPERY Montaña standout Alex Compton drives past TeleTech's Nino Gelig in Saturday's game won by the Jewels.

RODEL ROTONI

PBL: Tortillos, Jewels collide for early lead

THERE WILL BE NO TRACE OF bitterness when Granny Goose coach Robert Sison faces his former team in the PBL Unity Cup today.

"I'm coaching without hatred in my heart," said Sison. "For me, I'll just coach. It's nothing personal."

Granny Goose and Montaña will dispute the early lead at 4 p.m. at the San Andres Gym after Magnolia and TeleTech clash at 2 p.m.

Sison said he was initially apprehensive after spending only two weeks with the Tortillos.

"I was worried that there might be resistance but I didn't see that," said Sison, who resigned from Montaña after a disagreement with the management.

The Tortillos kicked off their campaign with a 64-55 upset win over the Magnolia Spinners, last conference's champion.

The Jewels also had a good start, rolling back newcomer TeleTech Titans, 65-62.

STANDINGS	W	L
R. or Shine	1	0
G. Goose	1	0
Toyota Otis	1	0
Montaña	1	0
Harbour	0	1
TeleTech	0	1
Magnolia	0	1
Hapee-PCU	0	1

**GAMES TODAY (San
Andres Gym)**
2 p.m.—TeleTech vs
Magnolia
4 p.m.—Granny
Goose vs Montaña

The Spinners are expected to recover from their opening-day loss, but the Titans also showed that they are no pushovers.

Coach Jerry Codifera remained confident that the Titans would remain competitive even if his squad is composed mostly of role players.

"We have to come up with adjustments against Magnolia," said Codifera. "Most of my players didn't get enough minutes [in our first game]. This is a big transition for them."

Granny Goose got a big lift from JR Quiñahan, who showed he has recovered from his injury by scoring 14 points and hauling down 10 rebounds against Magnolia.

Kelvin dela Peña, who suited up for Harbour

Update on La Salle scandal

THE FACT-FINDING COMMITTEE TASKED TO probe the La Salle eligibility scandal is expected to present its findings to the UAAP board on March 30. The meeting will kick off a series of deliberation before the league issues, in the third week of April, its decision on the case involving Archers Mark Benitez and Tim Gatchalian. Suspension from the league is among the possible sanctions La Salle could face. In 1994, Adamson was suspended for a year for fielding Marlou Aquino despite academic deficiencies. The five-man panel, headed by Fr. Ermito de Sagon of the UST, recently completed its inquiry. La Salle filed a one-year leave of absence from the men's basketball tournament last January. But the UAAP turned down the request, noting that basketball is one of the league's two compulsory sports.

Centre last conference, also had a solid debut with the Tortillos, chipping in 12 points.

League veteran Alex Compton and Froilan Baguion took over in the final minute to lead the in-form Jewels past the Titans. *Jasmine W. Payo*



RYAN Mendoza shows his trophy after besting a Belgian and an American for the title.



MEGA SALE!
on March 31, 2006 • Starts at 8:30 a.m. sharp.

Mendoza rules Asian Duathlon in Thailand

NATIONAL DUATHLON CHAMPION Ryan Mendoza became the first Filipino to win an Open competition as he ruled the Asian Duathlon Cup last Saturday in Thailand.

Mendoza, preparing for the Clark-Asian Championship on April 9 at the Clark Expo grounds, clocked one hour 53 minutes and 20 seconds for the 10K run-40K bike-5K run race.

An Air Force enlisted man and supported by the Clark Development Corp, along with the other members of the national team, the

Clark Development Corp. president Antonio Ng, who said their "all-out support for the RP team paid off."

In the women's division, Southeast Asian Games cycling medalist Marites Bitbit suffered mechanical trouble and failed to finish the race. But Sen. Pia Cayetano, who competed in the age-group level, finished a fighting fifth in 2:37.49.

Triathlon Association of the Philippines president Tom Carrasco Jr. said Mendoza's victory "proved that Filipino athletes, given proper training and funding, can compete at the Asian and world levels."

Mendoza's fine form elated

Cage stakeholders, Lina continue to trade barbs

By *Jasmine W. Payo*

THE FOUR MAJOR STAKEHOLDERS WHICH crafted Pilipinas Basketball as the new cage body yesterday criticized moves that aim to "delay and ultimately deny" the group's bid to seek recognition from the world basketball federation (Fiba).

But Basketball Association of the Philippines president Joey Lina, the fifth stakeholder named by Fiba in its Memorandum of Understanding forged with the Philippine Olympic Committee last year, said the group is merely looking for a "scapegoat."

In a joint statement, the PBA, PBL, UAAP and NCAA "lamented Lina's tactics and positions," which they said may "ultimately deny the country's re-entry into the sport's international arena."

"It is not true that we never listened to Joey Lina's concerns and suggestions," said PBA commissioner Noli Eala.

Lina maintained that the five stakeholders had already agreed upon a restructured BAP in four previous meetings. But another process—the formation of a new cage body—was "abruptly agreed upon" during the fifth meeting, which Lina failed to attend.

Eala, however, said that the readmission of a restructured BAP to the POC no longer "made sense" because of the "extremely negative baggage the group has had the past several years."

"That's a flimsy excuse, this negative baggage only exists in their minds," answered Lina. "Don't make me a scapegoat if Fiba rejects this new federation."

UAAP representative Junjun Capistrano said that the readmission of the BAP was "merely discussed as one of the options."



EALA CAPISTRANO

Capistrano noted that it was "not the only path" they discussed to lift the Fiba suspension.

"We talked about it since Joey Lina promised a thorough revamp and restructuring of the BAP," said NCAA representative Fr. Vic Calvo. "But he never even worked towards this."

"It was possible for us to keep the shell of the old BAP and just populate it with new people representing all the stakeholders, but this was not really what the MoU called for."

Lina recently presented Fiba documents that clarified the MoU last Sept. 29. The two letters, signed by secretary general Patrick Baumann, noted that BAP must be expelled first from Fiba before a new federation can be formed.

"I have explained to them for the nth time that the MoU was clarified by Baumann," said Lina.

The stakeholders, however, remain optimistic that Pilipinas Basketball will earn Fiba's approval.

"The sooner the new constitution and by-laws pass muster with the Fiba, we shall be inviting other leagues to join us as we forge ahead with Pilipinas Basketball," said PBL commissioner Chi- no Trinidad.



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A20 N. Cotabato clobbers Valencia

AMAS, KIDAPAWAN CITY—THE North Cotabato Braves of Gov. Manny Piñol rode on a record-breaking 36-point first quarter to snap Valencia Golden Harvest's two-game winning run with a 90-74 rout Sunday night in a southern division match in the NBC national basketball championship at the jampacked provincial capitol gym here.

Former Iloilo Warrior Eduardo Allado Jr. scattered 18 points, grabbed five rebounds and dished out two assists as the Braves stopped the visiting cagers of Valencia Mayor Jose Galario Jr.

The Braves' output in the first 10 minutes eclipsed the 35-point fourth quarter

registered by the Iligan Crusaders in their win over North Cotabato last week.

"We're motivated by our desire to give the home crowd a good show," said Braves coach Neil "James" Berneil. "Our loss to Iligan was in our minds. The boys badly wanted to rebound from that loss."

The Braves went 6-of-19 from the three-point territory to foil Golden Harvest's bid to make it three in a row in the tourney sponsored by Panasonic, Sulpicio Lines, Nature's Spring Mineral Water, Spring Cooking Oil, Regent Foods, Firefly Lightnings, Molten and Prime Channel.

Rex Ligue and Anselmo Dagatan backed up Allado with 14 and 13 points,

respectively, as the Braves improved their record to 1-1.

North Cotabato jumped to a 13-point lead at the end of the opening canto. The Golden Harvest made crucial adjustments and even surged ahead 64-63 at the start of the payoff period.

The scores:

N. COTABATO 80—Allado 18, Ligue 14, Dagatan 13, Regalado 10, Tamayo 8, Jawod 8, Reyes 5, Martinez 2, Coldura 1, Cabang 1, Clar 0, Sansas 0, Del Norte 0, Elrata 0, binas 0.

VALENCIA 74—Adams 15, Cruz 14, Navales 13, Cabill 10, Celiz 9, Tallagatos 7, Beramli 6, Prada 4, Cummings 4, Dumaplig 2, Arquero 0, Cesar 0, Clavel 0.

Quarters: 36-23, 49-42, 63-64, 80-74

Samsung Jungolf Tour tees off today at Club Malarayat

LIPA CITY—A THREE-WAY FIGHT AMONG Orchard, Riviera and Aguinaldo looms as the Jungolf Interclub tournament, the opening leg of the Samsung Summer Circuit, gets going today at the Mt. Malarayat Golf and Country Club here.

Wolen Superal, the reigning world champion in the 11-12 years division, and his sister Crystal will be joined by seasoned Korean lass Lee Seo-jae in leading the Orchard campaign against all boys' teams from Riviera and Aguinaldo.

IG Gutierrez and Carlo Legaspi will be at the helm of the Riviera bid while Gino Bunyi and Brent Sumampang will carry the fight for

Aguinaldo in the 54-hole event which serves as the official qualifier for two slots to the Mastercard Junior Masters in Australia.

Also fielding teams are Wack Wack, Malarayat, Royal Northwoods and Valley. Defending champion Manila Southwoods begged off.

Samsung and Philippine Airlines are the main sponsors of the circuit organized by the Junior Golf Foundation of the Philippines in coordination with the Federation of Golf Clubs in the Philippines. The other sponsors are DHL, Callaway, Titleist, Mizuno, La Jolla, Taylor Made, Wilson, Ping, MCCI Air Liquid, INQUIRER Golf and Michael Guy.

Cavs nip Rockets; Pacers stop 76ers

NEW YORK—LEBRON JAMES SCORED 36 points, including the go-ahead basket in overtime, as the Cleveland Cavaliers beat the Houston Rockets 104-102 for their fifth straight National Basketball Association win on Sunday.

The Cavaliers improved to 41-29 with the victory in Houston and now sit fourth in the Eastern Conference standings, 10 games ahead of ninth-place Chicago, with 12 games left to play.

Those numbers put Cleveland on the verge of clinching its first playoff spot since 1998, leaving Cleveland coach Mike Brown pleased with where his team is and how the club played Sunday.

"Going through games like this should really help us to be able to close it the right way," Brown told reporters.

"To execute it offensively and defensively at the end is huge." Cleveland never trailed in overtime after James forced the extra period with a lay-up with 22 seconds left, followed by a free throw after he was fouled by Yao Ming.

Yao then had a chance to win the game in the dying seconds of regulation, but he lost the ball

outside the lane while under heavy pressure.

James was 0-5 against Houston in his career before the win and turned in another stellar performance just four days after hitting the game-winning basket in a 120-118 overtime win over the Charlotte Hornets.

Houston led after all of the first three quarters, taking a 47-45 lead at the half and enjoying a three-point lead heading to the fourth quarter, but still lost for the seventh time in its past eight games.

Damon Jones added 22 points for the Cavs, who also got 21 points and eight rebounds from Zydrunas Ilgauskas, who did a strong job covering Yao for most of the game as well.

Yao had 27 points and seven rebounds to lead the Rockets, who sit 12th in the Western Conference and appear set to miss the post-season this year.

Complete results: Indiana 92, Philadelphia 79; Minnesota 98, NY Knicks 94; Milwaukee 125, Toronto 116 (OT); Chicago 101, Boston 97; Cleveland 104, Houston 102 (OT).

SOLAR Sports will air the Indiana-Miami tussle at 8:30 a.m. today with a replay at 8 p.m.



BULLS' Tyson Chandler (right) blocks a shot by Celtics' Paul Pierce. AP

Foreign-spiked cast swings into action as DHL Amateur Open golf gets going

By Musong R. Castillo

CANLUBANG, LAGUNA—THE DHL Amateur Open golf championship just got a sprinkling of international flavor.

All eight members of the Singaporean national team in the last Southeast Asian Games and a host of Koreans based in the country will slug it out with the Philippines' best as the prestigious tournament gets off the ground today at tough Cangolf North here.

Choo Tze Huang spearheads the Singapore side, which was beaten badly for the gold by Team Philippines and

Juvic Pagunsan in the 23rd SEAG at the Country Club last December.

Pagunsan is now a pro, but a slew of RP pool members who call this course home are entered, led by steady Jay Bayron, Boyet Saragoza and former winner Jun Bernis.

Michael Bibat, the former winner of the Singapore Am, junior standout Tonits Asistio and other stars from the powerhouse Manila Southwoods squad have also signed up.

The mainstays of the Del Monte team, led by Buboy Jaraula and Louie Dacudao are also entered, like the other

heroes for Canlubang in the Philippine Airlines Interclub last month who also belong to the National Caddies' Open pool.

Jonel Ababa, Joseph Labajo, Mark Fernando, Rufino Bayron and the NCO winner two weeks ago, Jessie Balasabas, will also strut their stuff in one of the most important individual amateur championships in the country.

Rod and Joe Feliciano, DHL country head Larry Liamson and Canlubang team manager Luigi Yulo will hit the ceremonial drives opening the tournament.

POC ready to admit Pilipinas Basketball

By Marc Anthony Reyes

PILIPINAS BASKETBALL IS EXPECTED TO BE admitted as the country's new cage body when the Philippine Olympic Committee general assembly convenes today.

The noontime meeting at the Dasmariñas Village home of POC president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco will also decide the chief of mission of the RP campaign in the Asian Games in Doha, Qatar, this December and elect a new vice president to replace the resigned Rey Jayo of judo.

Also in the agenda is the report of the Asian Task Force charged with laying down the criteria for the selection of the RP squad to the Asian.

The entry of Pilipinas Basketball will be recommended by the POC basketball committee which had earlier approved the organization of the new cage group by four of five major stakeholders based on a Memorandum of Understanding forged between the POC and the world basketball federation (Fiba) last year.

The four stakeholders are the PBA, the PBL, the UAAP and the NCAA. Joey Lina, the fifth stakeholder as president of the Basketball Association of the Philippines, abandoned the group, claiming the four adopted a new organizational process when he failed to attend the body's fifth meeting.

The POC is expected to name chair Robert Aventajado as Asiad chief of mission with First Gentleman Mike Arroyo seemingly bent on leaving Philippine sports alone after serving as its chief fund-raiser in the last two Southeast Asian Games.

Indy car racer dies

HOMESTEAD, FLORIDA—INDY-CAR RACER Paul Dana of the United States was killed in a crash during a practice session here Sunday before the Indy 300. The accident came during the final pre-race testing before the first Indy Racing League event of the season at the 1.5-mile oval at Homestead-Miami Speedway. "This is a very black day," said Bobby Rahal, a former racer and the 30-year-old driver's team owner. AFP

SPORTSWATCH

Compton launches Nike Elite cage camp

LOOKING TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE COUNTRY'S QUEST TO REGAIN ITS LOFTY standing in Asian basketball, PBL star Alex Compton and his peers have launched the Nike Elite Basketball Camp, a unique grassroots development program for high school cagers. Under the program, 80 players from Metro Manila aged 14 to 16 will get the chance to further hone their skills in an all-expense paid, six-day cage camp starting April 7 at Brent Mamplasan in Laguna. Chosen from a field of 300 aspirants by a group of professional players, trainers and coaches led by Ati Badolato, the 80 cagers will be housed for six days at Brent School. To ensure all players will get personalized training, one trainer will be assigned to every five camp participants. "The Philippines was the best in Asia for a long time," said Compton, the camp's project director, in a press briefing yesterday at the Wasabi Bistro and Bar in Makati. "We'd like to help bring back those glory days." Compton and Badolato will work with several other top trainers and players including NBA veteran David Wood, Coach E cage camp founder Eric Altamirano and former PBA star Ronnie Magsanoc in the day activities. Evening sessions will feature Alaska coach Tim Cone and Kirk Collier, among others.

Magnaye, Del Mundo gain junior q'finals

PETER MAGNAYE AND VIRGIL DEL MUNDO DOWNED THEIR RESPECTIVE FOES in different fashions Sunday to reach the quarterfinal round in boys' singles of the JVC Open Junior Championships at SM Megamall over the weekend. The 13-year-old Magnaye routed Kenwart Toledo, 21-11, 21-6, under the new rally point scoring system. Magnaye, playing for the PNP, faces Philip Escueta of RAQ4 when action in the quarterfinals of this event sponsored by JVC (Philippines) resumes on May 28 at SM Sta. Rosa. Del Mundo hung tough to repulse Mervin Santiago, 21-18, 21-18. Phillip Escueta survived teammate Jefferson Patawaran, 21-16, 19-21, 21-17, on a day stuffed with closely fought matches among the country's top shuttlers in the 14-under division. In other matches: Kelvin Panganiban d. Ramon Guerrero 21-23, 21-18, 21-18; Ralp Ubungin d. Kevin Suarez, 21-9, 18-21, 21-18; Laurence Carlos d. Kevin Maghirang, 21-18, 21-14; Nikko Angsico d. Kevin Ponciano, 21-18, 19-21, 21-14; Honestio Buendia III d. Arlo Madrid, 21-9, 21-8.

60-fight roster today at Sta. Ana

THE FIRST 3-COCK DERBY THIS YEAR AT SANTA ANA COCKPIT sizzles today, with 60 encounters on tap at the A.P. Reyes Avenue in Makati City. A guaranteed prize of P150,000 is at stake, said pit manager Butchyo Olano, who is assisting host Lito Roque. Entry fee is P5,500. Another 3-cock event sizzles on April 11, with Boy Corcueria as host. The regular "Fastest Win One-Cock Ultan" of Sta. Ana Cockpit is scheduled this Saturday. For inquiries, call 898-3474 or 898-3475.

Baguio rumor bugs

SPECTATOR



Al S. Mendoza

IT'S A RUMOR, BUT I'LL SAY IT JUST THE SAME. Rumors have a weird way of filtering into our consciousness. The earlier we expose them, the better.

And what's this rumor crying out to be heard?

Camp John Hay wants to do it alone.

The rumor mill says Camp John Hay wants to stage the Fil-Am Golf Tournament this December in Baguio all by its lonesome.

No more Baguio Country Club, that bastion of everything prim and proper in the City of Pines.

No more Baguio Country Club, CJH's perennial partner in hosting the Fil-Am the last 55 years or so.

What a shame.

Whoever floated the rumor, whoever crafted it, must be out of his/her mind.

Whodunit?

Could it be Garci?

Well and fine if Garci did it.

That'd be a genuine true lie.

But this I can tell with conviction: Bob Sobrepeña, the level-headed, calculating top honcho of CJH, will never allow such crap to be even tabled for boardroom discussion.

Just entertaining it would be a sign of cowardice, if not downright treachery.

What's Baguio Country Club done to deserve such an insult, if not iniquity?

To exclude Baguio Country Club from a

tournament that has become part and parcel of a lasting legacy, a cherished tradition, is tantamount to signing the death sentence of Fil-Am, considered the world's biggest golf tournament, participants-wise.

C'mon, let's nip it in the bud, this rumor that is as ugly as making GMA the next dictator after Marcos.

C'mon, Bob, say it ain't so. I want to hear it from no one but you. Better yet, drop me a note saying it ain't true?

Once and for all, let's put an end to this charade.

TOP GEAR. My fellow Beatlemaniac, Vernon "Sean" B. Sarne, has unraveled his latest babe—Top Gear Philippines. An automotive magazine owned by Summit Publishing, Top Gear's April issue features, among others, James Bond's first car, the Aston Martin DB5 with all its high-tech gadgets and weapons; Jay Leno's fancy, the modern-day Lamborghini Miura; and,

Aliya Parc's most talked-about asset these days—her blue Nissan Patrol, that is. The new Toyota Previa is on the cover of Vernon's state-of-the-art magazine, which hits newsstands this week. All the best, Vernon!

PBA BASH. As I love to say here, late is never late.

I raise a glass to guys like Al Panlilio, MVP's indefatigable man in Hong Kong, who made the Talk 'N Text-Purefoods game on March 19 in the former Crown Colony possible, and Ricky Vargas, the TNT governor, who made my dear colleagues' stay in Asia's shoppers' mecca a most enjoyable one. Special mention also goes to Commissioner Eala, whose pre-game speech at the Queen Elizabeth Stadium drew cheers from our so-called "new heroes" many of whom shed tears of joy watching the first ever PBA game in Hong Kong. And finally, the nightcap glass goes to ABC5's Bob Barreiro, Sienna Olazo and Kristine Camorada, and Willie Marcial, Patrick Gregorio, Edwin Bautista, Chito Bautista and lawyer AGA, the RMN 558 broadcaster nonpareil cum lawyer of the oppressed and the downtrodden. And, yes, also to Winston de la Cruz, the ABC5 executive who is also a fellow Beatlemaniac, my deepest gratitude for the warm company. To you all, I say bravo!

Comments to menu@pldtdsl.net

Visayas squads clash for beach volley slots

IT'S THE VISAYAS TEAMS' TURN to dispute slots for the Boracay phase of the 10th Nestea Beach Volley Championships today and tomorrow.

There are 12 men's and 12 women's teams but only the top four from each division will make it to the semis and finals of the

annual summer event presented by Nestea. Action starts at 8 a.m. at the La Salle Greenhills sand court.

Competing schools are Colegio dela Purisima Concepcion, Foundation U, Iloilo Doctors College, Southwestern U, University of Cebu, University of Negros Occ. Reco-

letos, University of San Agustin, University of San Carlos, University of San Jose Recoletos, University of St. La Salle Bacolod, University Southern Philippines Foundation and University of the Visayas.

Southwestern U is eyeing in record fourth straight crown in the women's division. Other for-

mer champions from the Visayas are San Jose Recoletos (2002 and 2004) and Foundation (200

TUESDAY, MARCH 28, 2006

Maria, Amelie hurdle rivals

MIAMI—MARIA SHARAPOVA saved eight set points before finally grinding out a 6-2 7-6 third-round victory over Maria Elena Camerin at the Nasdaq-100 Open on Sunday.

By contrast, Amelie Mauresmo trounced fellow Frenchwoman Marion Bartoli for the third time with a 6-4 6-0 win.

Top seed Mauresmo now plays 14th-seeded Ana Ivanovic of Serbia and Montenegro, who beat Ukrainian Alona Bondarenko 6-3 5-7 6-3.

In the men's draw, third seed David Nalbandian of Argentina beat Czech Tomas Berdych 6-7 6-1 6-0 to reach the fourth round. Russian Nikolay Davydenko also advanced. Reuters



SHARAPOVA
Scrambling
advance

GMU stuns Connecticut, enters NCAA Final Four

WASHINGTON—GEORGE MASON extended an astonishing run in the US National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) basketball tournament here Sunday with an 86-84 over-time upset of top seed Connecticut.

The victory lifted the Patriots, a controversial invited selection to the field of 65, into a national championship semi-final Saturday at Indianapolis against Florida, which eliminated Villanova 75-62 Sunday.

If George Mason can continue the Cinderella dance through the top US college squads, the school would play for a national championship on April 3 against either the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) or Louisiana State.

Jai Lewis scored 20 points to lead

five George Mason players in double figures as the Patriots, an 11th seed, became the worst-seeded team to reach the "Final Four" since Louisiana State did so in 1986 as an 11th seed.

Next in the Patriots' path is Florida. This will be the first time since 1980 that all four top-seeded teams failed to advance from the regionals into the "Final Four."

AFP

Ames wins, takes vacation

PONTE VEDRA BEACH, FLORIDA—CANADA'S Stephen Ames fired a stunning 67 here Sunday to win the PGA Players Championship then pulled another shocker by saying he will skip the Masters for a family vacation.

Ames went five-under par, the low score of the final round, to defeat South African runner-up Retief Goosen by six strokes and capture the biggest victory of his career with a 72-hole total of 14-under par 274. AFP



AMES

ACC

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BY BILL AMEND A. LIPIN



BY JESS ABRERA

MARVIN



BY TOM ARMSTRONG

PUGAD BABOY



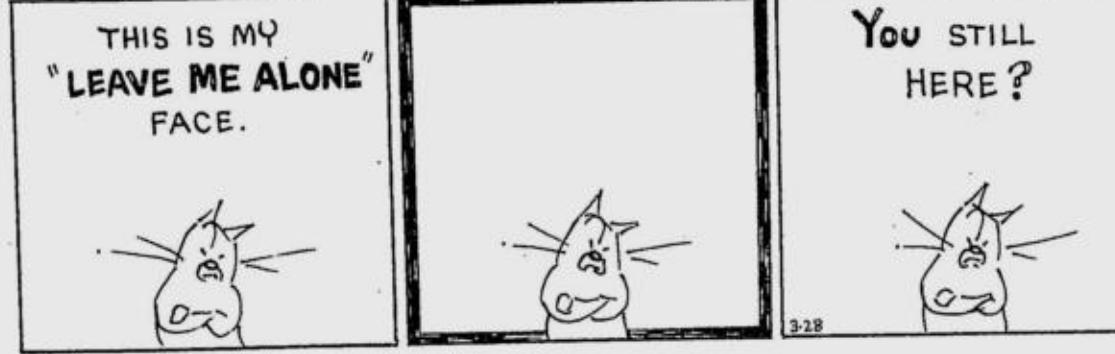
BY P.M. JUNIOR

BABY BLUES



BY JERRY SCOTT

MUTTS



BY PATRICK McDONNELL

ATOMO AND WEBOY

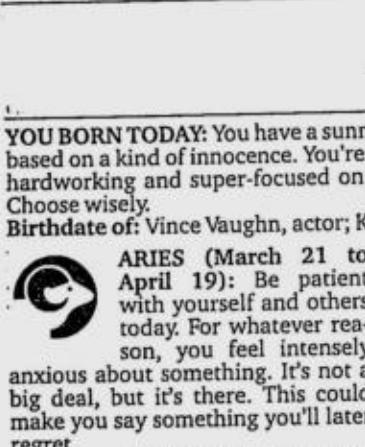


BY LYRA GARCELLANO

DIVINE COMEDY



BY STEVEN PABALINAS

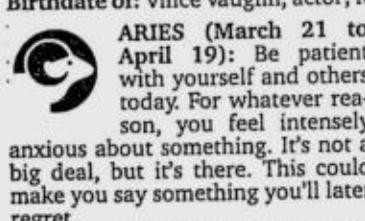


HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You have a sunny, friendly, upbeat disposition. People like to be in your company. Your humor is based on a kind of innocence. You're extremely tolerant and accepting of situations and others. In your work, you're hardworking and super-focused on whatever you do. You will be presented with an important choice this year. Choose wisely.

Birthdate of: Vince Vaughn, actor; Ken Howard, actor; Reba McEntire, singer.



ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Be patient with yourself and others today. For whatever reason, you feel intensely anxious about something. It's not a big deal, but it's there. This could make you say something you'll later regret.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): You might encounter someone quite powerful who really makes you think (probably this morning). Quite possibly, you are the powerful person who impacts someone else in a very memorable way.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Avoid confrontations with authority figures this morning. It's not worth it. People will dig in their heels and hold to their course. (Arguments will inevitably follow.)

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Discussions about politics and religion this morning could definitely get out of hand. Better to keep the friendship than to insist on making your point. Don't you agree?

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Avoid important decisions about financial matters or anything that you share with someone else. You might be absolutely convinced about something and then later change your mind.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): In discussions with close friends and partners, things will heat up quickly, especially this morning. That's because everybody feels a bit hot under the collar. Plus, people are in a "know it all" mood. (Not good.)

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): You want to make great improvements to your job today. Similarly, you might have big ideas about how to improve your health. Sounds like a plan to me.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Parents must be patient with children this morning. Don't be too bossy. It's so easy to forget that you were once a kid yourself, right? Patience with everyone is recommended today.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Quite possibly, small appliances will break down this morning or even just a dish could be broken. Go slowly. Take a deep breath. Remember to smile. (This softens everything.)

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): You have to admit you're a perfectionist. Today you want to persuade somebody to agree with you. Is this really necessary? (I thought so.)

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Avoid arguments about money and possessions, especially this morning. People feel extremely territorial today. Wait until tomorrow to talk about this.

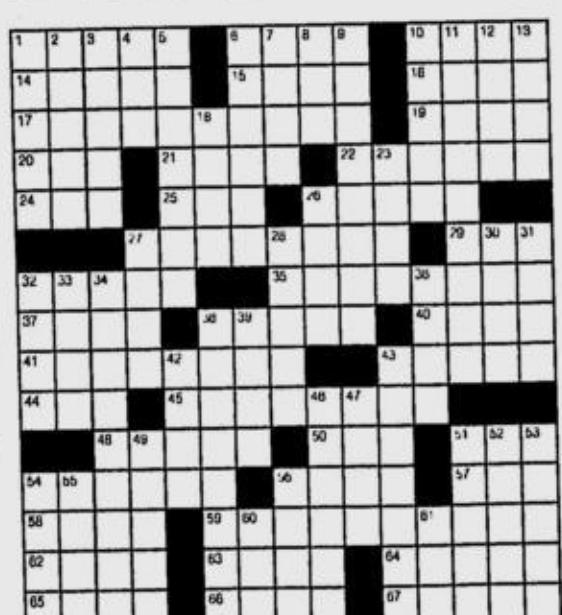
PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): You feel unusually emotional about something this morning. Don't act or react while you feel this way. Wait until tomorrow to state your case. (You'll be glad you did.)

DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS

1 Hurt by a hornet
6 Track down
10 Subtle alert
14 Bert's Muppet pal
15 On a cruise
16 Medicinal plant
17 Oater flora
19 Ruffle one's feathers
20 Diamonds, slantly
21 Lab culture gel
22 Lion groups
24 Court divider
25 chi chi'uan
26 Wet thoroughly
27 Laugh at
29 Lipstick shade
32 Leader of the Argonauts
35 Camera opening
37 Nobel Prize ceremony site
38 Subdues
40 Nastase of tennis
41 Quick-tempered gal
43 Hammerhead features
44 Sixth sense
45 Brought into agreement
48 Hits on the head
50 Sympathetic attention
51 Cozy hideaway
54 Shop around
56 Foolhardy
57 Night before
58 Go gallivanting
59 Cam-controlled tool
62 You said it!
63 Life of Riley
64 Ezra of poetry
65 Old sailors
66 Besson need
67 Catalogs

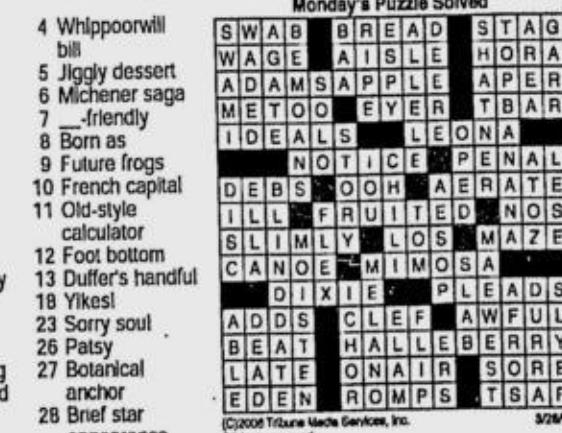
DOWN
1 Become established
2 Cease-fire
3 Not fulfilled



By Diane C. Baldwin

Columbia, MD

Monday's Puzzle Solved

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KIKO MACHINE



BY MANIX ABRERA

LOVEKNOTS

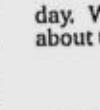


BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO

TULOK



BY PAPU AND TUM MILAMBILING



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GALLERIA

1 NORTH COUNTRY • THX	6 SHE'S THE MAN
1:35 4:20 7:05 9:50	12:20 2:45 5:10 7:35 10:00
2 NANNY MCPHEE	7 CO-ED SCANDAL
1:00 3:15 5:30 7:45 10:00	1:00 3:10 5:20 7:30 9:40
3 GLORY ROAD	8 CASANOVA
2:05 4:40 7:15 9:50	12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00
4 V FOR VENDETTA	9 HOSTEL
1:20 4:10 7:00 9:50	1:10 3:20 5:30 7:40 9:50
5 ULTRAVIOLET	10 BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN
11:00 1:10 3:20 5:30 7:40 9:50	1:30 4:20 7:10 10:00

HERMITA

1 NANNY MCPHEE	5 SHE'S THE MAN
2 HOSTEL	6 NORTH COUNTRY
V FOR VENDETTA	7 GLORY ROAD
3 ULTRAVIOLET	8 CASANOVA
4 CO-ED SCANDAL	9 HOSTEL
10:40 12:00 2:00 4:00 6:00 8:00 9:50	12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00

METRO EAST

1 HOUSE OF FURY	5 HOSTEL
1:00 3:00 5:00 7:00 9:00	1:00 3:00 5:00 7:00 9:00
2 NANNY MCPHEE	6 CO-ED SCANDAL
11:45 2:05 4:25 6:45 9:05	12:15 2:00 3:45 5:30 7:15 9:00
3 SHE'S THE MAN	7 GLORY ROAD
1:40 4:00 6:30 9:00	1:00 3:40 6:20 9:00
4 V FOR VENDETTA	8 ULTRAVIOLET
12:10 3:10 6:10 9:10	12:10 2:25 4:40 6:55 9:10

NOVALICHES

1 ULTRAVIOLET	4 V FOR VENDETTA
2 GLORY ROAD	5 NANNY MCPHEE
3 HOSTEL	6 CO-ED SCANDAL

CTISQUARE MALABON

1 HOSTEL	1 NANNY MCPHEE
2 TIGER BLADE	2 SHE'S THE MAN
3 RESERVE	3 ULTRAVIOLET
4 RESERVE	4 GLORY ROAD

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1 DATE MOVIE	1 SYRIANA	2 CASANOVA

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3 CASANOVA	2 SHAGGY DOG
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5 PRIDE AND PREJUDICE	4 PRIDE AND PREJUDICE
6 V FOR VENDETTA	5 SYRIANA

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AV-2

ROUNDUP



They're
back

RAY ROMANO,
John Leguizamo and
Dennis Leary have
lent their voices
anew to Manny, Sid
and Diego in "Ice Age
2: The Meltdown."

"I love Manny as a
character and I love
playing him," said
Romano of the "cur-
mudgeon with a big
chip on his shoulder
and a tough exterior."

Leguizamo was ea-
ger to find new facets
of Sid. "He wants re-
spect, to be taken se-
riously," the actor
said. "That's his
quest."

No guarantee

WELLINGTON, NEW
Zealand—After New
Zealand movie spe-
cialists grabbed an-
other three Oscars at
the 78th Academy
Awards in Los Ange-
les, five-time winner
Richard Taylor said
the awards do not
guarantee fresh of-
fers of work.

Taylor, head of
Wellington's
renowned digital
special effects house
Weta Workshop, won
the Oscar for Best Vi-
sual Effects, along
with Joe Letteri, Bri-
an Van't Hul and
Christian Rivers, for
director Peter Jack-
son's King Kong re-
make.

"We still have to
hustle for business
along with everyone
else," Taylor said.
"Weta has to compete
for the work like ev-
ery freelance compa-
ny, put in a cost-effec-
tive bid and do an in-
credibly high-quality
job to... demonstrate
we are worthy of the
next job."



Jobs TV

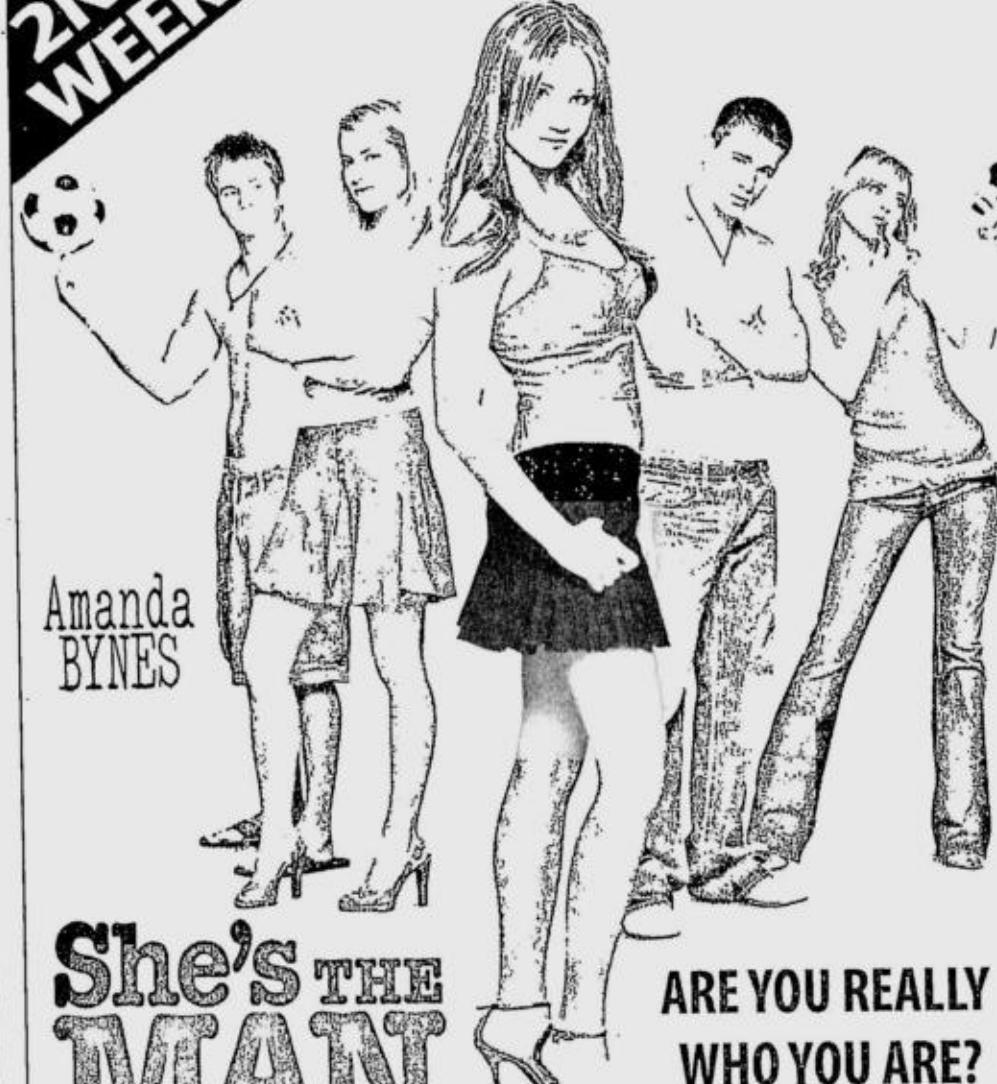
LOOKING FOR A
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Studio 23.

The show hosted
by Ria Tanjuatco-Trilo
has eight segments
which include: "On
the Job," a successful
person's typical
workday; "Corporate
Ladder," in which a
Convergys (a leader
in customer care, hu-
man resources and
billing services) hu-
man resource adminis-
trator explains
what it takes to suc-
ceed; "Dress Code";
"Classifieds," a listing
of job fairs and re-
levant workshops and
seminars; and "Free-
lance," which fea-
tures creative people
in arts-related, pe-
ripheral or alterna-
tive fields; "Tech De-
partment," on the lat-
est gadgets; and
"Help Desk," where
an HR expert an-
swers job-related
queries from view-
ers.

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Per BFAD Permit No. 0180, series of 2006

GATEWAY CINEMAS

ARANETA CENTER

Filipino-Dutch firm to invest P66M in coco coir making venture

By Ronnel W. Domingo

A FILIPINO-DUTCH COMPANY IS INVESTING an initial P66 million in a coco coir-producing venture expected to create jobs for about 2,000 households in the Bicol region.

The newly formed Corion Enterprises is also seen bringing in P19 million in export earnings during its first year of operations, according to the Department of Trade and Industry.

A joint venture between local firm Co-technologies Corp. and Dutch firms Onerco BV and Rinos BV, the company will be exporting all of its output to the Netherlands.

Trade Secretary Peter B. Favila said the project was "very much welcome" as it would provide livelihood opportunities and distribute income to the countryside.

Under the partnership, Corion would produce coco coir yarns that would be sent to the Netherlands for processing in-

to coco coir mats.

In turn, the mats will be marketed to the Philippines and other Asian markets including Japan, but Corion intends to eventually produce the mats in the Philippines.

Further, the Dutch government has granted the project 90,000 euros through its Program for Cooperation with Emerging Markets, which would be used to buy equipment and fund twine-making in Bicol and Quezon communities.

The project was an offshoot of international recognition accorded to Philippine geotextiles made of coco coir or coco mats.

Last year, coco mats won the Nature's Wisdom Award at the World Expo 2005 held in Japan; the Global 100 Eco-Tech Award at the Japan Techno-Fair; and the top award of the World Challenge Competition sponsored by the British Broadcasting Corp., Royal Dutch Shell, and Newsweek.

In the World Challenge, the country was

represented by Justino Arboleda's Juboken Enterprise, also known as Cocotech.

Juboken/Cocotech was the first to use coco coir in making geotextiles in the country and has become a major exporter of coco mats.

Favila said the DTI has been helping the coco coir and its related industries realize export potentials by stepping up its efforts to promote the export of coconut products to China.



REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION & COMMUNICATIONS
LAND TRANSPORTATION OFFICE
East Avenue, Quezon City
E-mail Address: ltoinbox@lto.gov.ph • Website: www.lto.gov.ph

Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid

Republic of the Philippines

LTO INSIDE WINDSHIELD VALIDATION STICKERS AND PLATE YEAR TAGS FOR 2006

The Land Transportation Office, through the General Funds (Funds 101) intends to apply the sum of Ten Million Five Hundred Thousand (P10,500,000.00) being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) of payment for the supply and delivery of 2006 Inside windshield validation stickers and plate year tags for the use of Sectoral Head Office and Regional Offices. Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid opening.

The Land Transportation Office now invites Bids from Eligible Bidders for the items. The required delivery schedule will be indicated in the approved Contract. The description of an eligible Bidder is contained in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB.

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act 9184, otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act," and is restricted to Filipino citizens/sole proprietorships, organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, and to citizens or organizations of a country the laws or regulations of which grant similar rights or privileges to Filipino citizens, pursuant to Republic Act 5183 (R.A. 5183) and subject to Commonwealth Act 138 (C.A. 138). Only Bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. The process for the eligibility check is described in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB. The bidder with the Lowest Calculated Bid (LCB) shall advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine responsiveness of the bid to technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during the post-qualification procedure.

Interested Bidders may obtain further information from the BAC Sub-Committee and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested Bidders from the address below and upon payment of a non-refundable fee in the amount of Php 10,000.00, in the form of cash. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.

The Land Transportation Office will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all interested parties on March 29, 2006 at 2:00 p.m. at the LTO-Library, East Avenue, Quezon City.

Bids and eligibility requirements must be delivered to the address below on or before April 10, 2006 at 2:00 P.M. All bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security in any of the following form.

Form of Security	Minimum Amount in % of Approved Budget for the Contract to be Bid
1. Cash, certified check, cashier's check, manager's check, bank draft or irrevocable letter of credit	One percent (1%)
2. Bank guarantee	One and a half Percent (1 1/2%)
3. Surety bond	Two and a half Percent (2 1/2%)
4. Foreign government guarantee	One hundred percent (100%)

Late Bids shall not be accepted

Bid opening shall be on April 10, 2006 at 2:00 P.M. at LTO-Library, East Avenue, Quezon City. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidder's representatives who choose to attend at the address below.

The Land Transportation Office reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

Land Transportation Office
Atty. Jimmy G. Pesigan – Chairman, BAC
East Avenue, Quezon City
(02) 921-9077 – telefax

Engr. Roberto S. Se, – Chairman, BAC Sub-Committee
Property Section, LTO, East Avenue, Quezon City
(02) 9292015 – telefax

(Sgd.) ATTY. JIMMY G. PESIGAN
BAC-Chairman

(PDI – March 28, 2006)

Meridian staff quit en masse

Row with PLDT management sparks resignation of 40 officers

By Daxim L. Lucas

A CONTROVERSIAL AFFILIATE of Smart Communications Inc. was rocked by a mass resignation that saw 40 senior management and staff members leave the company yesterday.

A Smart spokesman confirmed that five senior managers and 35 research and development staffers of Meridian Telekoms Inc. resigned over "differences of opinion" with the company's new owners.

Smart—the main cellular phone unit of telecommunications giant PLDT—bought Meridian late last year.

The mass resignation which was revealed yesterday, was spearheaded by Meridian president and CEO Rene dos Remedios.

"I have left the company," he said in a telephone interview, adding that he had actually tendered his resignation last week.

Dos Remedios said Meridian was in "very capable hands" despite his and his research and development team's departure.

PLDT and Smart chairman Manuel Pangilinan acknowledged to reporters that internal differences led to the mass resignation, but declined to comment further on it.

Smart spokesman Ramon Isberto confirmed the mass resignation, saying: "There were differences of opinion on how to move forward. So they decided to leave the company."

"We simply agreed to disagree," he added.

Isberto said Rolando Peña has been appointed officer-in-charge to oversee the company's day-to-day operations.

Smart plans to raise its stake in Meridian from 49 percent to 100 percent by the middle of this year.

Meridian provides wireless broadband and data services to small and medium-scale businesses nationwide.

It operates under a legislative franchise and was issued a provisional authority to operate by the NTC.

"We have the best hybrid rice seeds suitable for the tropical climate and this is to our advantage," Lim told the INQUIRER.

Lim claimed that hybrid rice technology allows farmers to



PLASTIC CULTURE.

Discarded plastic spoons and forks have become a new way of rescuing tradition in Kalinga. These beads made of reshaped plastic replicate authentic beads produced by Kalinga tribes centuries ago.

EVE SPIRITU

Hybrid rice sales in '06 seen rising

By Christine A. Gaylican

LOCAL HYBRID RICE SEED PRODUCERS expect industry sales to grow by 40-50 percent this year due partly to rising demand from neighboring countries.

SI Agritech president Henry Lim Bon Liang told the INQUIRER that local hybrid rice seeds were in demand because these were best suited for tropical weather.

This explains growing exports to Bangladesh, Indonesia and Myanmar, among others, Lim Bon Liang said.

"We have the best hybrid rice seeds suitable for the tropical climate and this is to our advantage," Lim told the INQUIRER.

Lim claimed that hybrid rice technology allows farmers to

more than double their production from four metric tons of rice a hectare to as much as nine metric tons.

The promise of higher production has led to increasing demand for seeds from Filipino farmers.

Other producers and distributors of hybrid rice seeds, including farmers' cooperatives, private companies and Bayer Crop Science Philippines, also see rising sales of hybrid rice seeds this year.

Bayer, the third largest producer and seller of hybrid seeds, said that seeds sold this cropping season could cover 30,000 hectares.

"We see a 33 to 40 percent growth in sales in 2006. Since we started in 2002, there is a steady growth in sales as more farmers

shifted to hybrid rice seeds because the changing weather conditions encouraged them to invest in good seeds," said Philippine BioScience manager Carlos Miguel Saplala in a separate interview.

According to a study done by the Department of Agriculture's regional offices, farmers surveyed nationwide reported an increase in income to P55,055 to P61,000 a hectare due to the planting of hybrid rice seeds.

The average cost of production using the rice varieties, on the other hand, ranges between P19,000 to P20,000 a hectare.

The cultivation of hybrid rice seeds is expected to prop up the country's palay production, according to the Department of Agriculture.

Call center boom picks up steam

From page B1

"The Philippine operations will continue to be at the heart of the company."

Two-thirds of the company's employees are based in the Philippines.

Also yesterday, President Macapagal-Arroyo ordered a scholarship program for 100,000 Filipinos to ensure a "continuing pool of world class Filipino personnel" for the

call center industry.

The President made the announcement at the inauguration of the new call center facility of the Sutherland Global Services at the Export-Import Plaza in Makati City.

Thanking Sutherland officials, the President said she was elated that the New York-based outsourcing firm was employing 750 Filipinos and plans to employ 750 more in the next six months.

This year, eTelecare will expand its operations in Makati, Libis and Alabang, and is actively searching for a suitable location for its fifth call center in the country.

At the same time, the company also expects its revenues to rise further as demand for call center services and business process out-

sourcing increases in its primary North American market.

eTelecare chair Fred Ayala predicted that the company would make as much as P9 billion in revenues this year, representing a significant jump from the P7 billion in revenues the company reported in 2005.

The eTelecare officials dismissed worries about the rising level of competition in the call center industry, saying there was still a large pool of potential clients which stand to benefit from outsourcing some of their internal operations to call centers and business process outsourcing (BPO) firms.

"There are over four million call center clients in the US alone," Ayala said. "We are still very early in the industry. This is just a drop in the bucket."

Meantime, Ms. Arroyo said she has ordered the Technical Education Skills Development Authority (Tesda) to "develop a scholarship program for the call center and business process outsourcing (BPO) firms."

But in a roundtable discussion in the afternoon, President Arroyo said putting up buildings for a call center school may be expensive that it would be better to just grant the scholarships to students.

Tesda Chair Gusto Syjuco told reporters that the President has increased his office's budget from P50 million to P500 million in order to fund the call center scholarship program.



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INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Land Bank of the Philippines, through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), invites suppliers/consultants/contractors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the hereunder project:

Name of Project : Graphic Design Requirements
Brief Description : Design & Creative rendition - services cover conceptualization, design execution, comprefinal artwork preparation, photography, photo direction and printing supervision of LANDBANK major collaterals

Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) : P 7,015,250.00

Source of Funding : LBP Funds

Contract Duration : Calendar Year 2006 - 2008

Eligibility of prospective bidders shall be checked using a non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria. The evaluation procedure to be adopted shall be Quality Cost Based Evaluation (QCBE). Bids whose technical proposals pass the minimum technical hurdle score of 70 shall have its financial proposal opened and evaluated. The technical proposal shall carry 85% weight in the bid evaluation while the remaining 15% shall be based on the financial proposal.

Bidding for the above requirements is scheduled on April 17, 2006 at 1:00PM and pertinent Bid Documents may be obtained from the General Services Department, 25th Floor, LANDBANK Plaza, M. H. del Pilar Street corner Dr. Quintos Street, Malate, Manila upon payment of a non-refundable fee of P1,000.00.

Interested suppliers are requested to attend the Pre-Bid Conference scheduled on April 5, 2006, 10:00 AM at the 25th Floor, Conference Room, LANDBANK Plaza, Malate, Manila

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-Bidding Conference(s), Evaluation of Bids, Post Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulation (IRR).

LANDBANK reserves the right to reject any or all bids, declare the bidding a failure or waive any required formality therein and make an award to the bidder whose bid is the most advantageous to the Bank.

BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE

(PDI – March 28 & April 4, 2006)



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INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

TUESDAY, MARCH 28, 2006

Transco takes over construction of 6 transmission projects worth P93.5M

By Abigail L. Ho

THE STATE-RUN NATIONAL TRANSMISSION Corp. (Transco) will take over the construction of six power transmission facilities worth P93.5 million, following its contractor's failure to complete the projects within the contract period.

Transco president and chief executive Alan Ortiz said the state firm had been "left with no option but to take over these projects" as, despite several follow-ups and notices, Alphaomega Integrated Corp. still failed to complete the projects

last year as scheduled.

Earlier in the year, Transco served separate notices of takeover to Alphaomega for three projects that were all supposed to have been completed in December 2005, inclusive of contract extension.

These are the 100-megavolt-ampere

(MVA) Quiot (Pardo) substation project, the Bacolod substation expansion project, and the New Bunawan switching station project.

Transco is also set to issue notices of takeover for the New Makban substation project, the Makban Switchyard-Calamba Tower 50 project, and the Cabanatu-

an substation expansion project.

Ortiz said construction works would resume as soon as a new qualified contractor is awarded the contracts for the transmission projects.

The cost to be incurred will be charged to Alphaomega's account.

MVP drops wary stance on PLDT prospects in '06

Japan's NTT Group also wants to increase its stake in RP telco

By Daxim L. Lucas
and Elizabeth L. Sanchez

BUSINESS PROSPECTS FOR telecommunications giant Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT) have improved over the last few weeks, prompting chairman Manuel V. Pangilinan to shed some of his initial caution about the company's 2006 earnings.

Speaking to reporters on Monday, Pangilinan described PLDT's outlook for this year as "more encouraging than a few weeks ago."

He did not specify the factors that are helping firm up the company's bottom line, but stressed that PLDT's net income, excluding gains from the continued strength of the peso against the US dollar, will show an improvement over last year's.

"Core earnings should grow," Pangilinan assured reporters and analysts.

Also, Pangilinan yesterday said that the Nippon Telephone and Telegraph Corp. (NTT) Group, the world's largest telecommunications conglomerate, would raise its stake in PLDT to 20 percent.

Pangilinan said that the NTT Group may raise its stake to as much as 21%. But that can only happen if First Pacific is able to raise its own shareholdings in the Philippine telco giant.

Collectively, NTT, through its subsidiaries NTT Communications Inc. and mobile phone giant NTT DoCoMo, has a 14-percent stake in PLDT.

DoCoMo and NTT Communications each hold 7 percent.

DoCoMo earlier bought half of affiliate NTT Communications Inc.'s 14-percent stake in PLDT.

The deal, worth 52.1 billion yen, or roughly \$440 million, allows NTT DoCoMo to acquire a seat on PLDT's 13-member board.

Last February, Pangilinan cautioned that the company's performance in 2006 would likely be "benign" and would pale in comparison to its performance of the past three years.

PLDT earned P34.1 billion in 2005, reflecting a 22-percent increase from the P28 billion it reported for the previous period. Most analysts were expecting PLDT to make only P32 billion, at most.

The company's 2005 net income figure is the highest figure ever reported, in absolute terms, for a Philippine-based corporation.

Of this amount, however, about P3 billion were due to the peso's strength, as the company earns substantial foreign currency-based revenue.

Already, the strong peso has manifested itself in the company's interim bottom line, although Pangilinan declined to reveal more details.

"Some gains today are because of foreign exchange gains," he said.

Planned Clark terminal attracts foreign investors

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

FOREIGN INVESTORS HAVE EXPRESSED their interest in building a passenger terminal at the 2,700-hectare Diosdado Macapagal International Airport (DMIA) at the Clark Special Economic Zone in Pampanga.

Peregrine Development International, which belongs to Kuwaiti's ruling family, has submitted a letter of intent to build the passenger terminal, Clark Development Corp. president Antonio Ng told reporters during a recent seminar of the Economic Journalists Association of the Philippines and San Miguel Corp. held at the Holiday Inn Clark in Pampanga.

The passenger terminal, to be dubbed Gateway 2015, is expected to ease Manila's main airports, which are seen to exceed their passenger capacity by 2015.

Ng stressed that the develop-

ment of Gateway 2015 will be done in compliance with Philippine build-operate-transfer laws.

He also confirmed that a second group, made up investors from Bahrain, along with Amable Aguiliz of AMA Computer College, has also expressed its interest in developing the terminal.

Aside from a new gateway passenger terminal, DMIA's existing low-cost carrier passenger terminal will be expanded to accommodate two planes at the same time.

The project may require some P800 million in funding from the Manila International Airport authority and is expected to be completed in June 2008, Ng said.

International passenger traffic at the DMIA grew by 456 percent to 34,461 passengers in December 2005, from 6,197 passengers in the same month of the previous year.

Gov't raises net worth standard for contractors

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE MINIMUM NET WORTH REQUIREMENT for building contractors has been raised in an effort to make the industry more competitive against foreign firms, according to Construction Industry Authority of the Philippines.

CIAP, an agency attached to the Department of Trade and Industry, said the new rule covered new licenses and registration as well as firms upgrading their license category whose documents were filed starting March 16.

Trade Secretary Peter B. Favila said the adjustment on the net worth requirements reflect the changes in construction costs over the years.

Favila, however, declined to specify the new net worth requirements.

Favila said that based on the Philippine Contractors Accreditation Board Resolution No. 145, Se-

ries of 2006, applicants from license categories AAA to Trade will be evaluated using the upgraded minimum net worth for Contracting Fiscal Year 2006-2007.

This is part of the implementation of PCAB Resolution that directed the upgrading of minimum net worth requirements for each category over a three-year period.

The first and second rounds of net worth adjustments were made in CFY 2004-2005 and CFY 2005-2006, respectively.

Trade Undersecretary Zenaida C. Maglaya, who is in charge of consumer welfare and trade regulation, said increasing the financial benchmark for contractors ensured their competence to handle construction projects.

She also advised consumers to deal only with licensed and qualified contractors for projects such as residential construction or remodeling to avoid fly-by-night operators.

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Globe, SingTel offer Kababayan SIM for OFWs in Singapore

IN RESPONSE TO THE COMMUNICATION needs of OFWs and their families, Globe Telecom has collaborated with Singapore-based telco provider, SingTel Mobile to offer a co-branded SIM for Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in Singapore. Dubbed as the Kababayan SIM, it is the first and only SIM card in the Singaporean market to offer IDD calls and international SMS to the Philippines at local rates.

First launched in December 2004, the Kababayan SIM has gained loyal patronage among OFWs in Singapore. With the Kababayan SIM, IDD calls to Globe and TM (Touch Mobile) subscribers in the Philippines are now locally priced at Sing\$0.22/minute, as compared to other operators' rates of Sing\$0.40/minute. International SMS to Globe and TM subscribers is also offered at lower rates: only Sing\$0.05 per text message, versus other operators' rate of Sing\$0.15 per message.

According to SingTel's vice president for consumer marketing Thomas Yeo, "This project is part of the company's effort to tap specific prepaid market segments in cooperation with its regional

partners. "We are pleased to keep our Filipino customers in touch with their loved ones while offering significant savings at the same time," he says. "Our collaboration with Globe Telecom has enabled us to offer an unparalleled value proposition that is truly relevant to the consumers."

To complement the Kababayan SIM offering in Singapore, Globe is also offering special IDD and ISMS promotional rates to enable its customers in the Philippines to call and text their family members in Singapore at lower cost. For Globe and TM subscribers, IDD calls to SingTel Mobile subscribers are now at a discounted rate of P7.50 per minute. For Globe subscribers, international text messages to SingTel Mobile subscribers can also be sent at the local rate of P1 per message.

In the Philippines, Globe Prepaid and TM subscribers can avail of discounts and privileges in various partner establishments by registering for membership to Globe Kababayan, Globe's special service arm for OFWs and their families. Information on job openings, loans, and OFW-related events are also

available through the Kababayan cell phone menu.

Globe chief operating advisor Andrew Buay views the joint project as part of an overall thrust to serve the growing OFW market segment. "This special offering is part of both companies' continuing commitment to enrich consumers' lives and bring families closer together through mobile communication. We envision more synergies between Globe and SingTel to help strengthen the bond between the Filipinos in Singapore and their loved ones back home," he says.

Globe's head of wireless business Ferdinand Cruz adds: "Globe continually aims to better serve our subscribers who have family members working abroad. The Kababayan SIM is part of our effort to understand and respond to the needs of OFWs and their families."

The Kababayan SIM is currently available in SingTel helio stores and local dealers at Lucky Plaza along Orchard Road in Singapore. For more information, visit the Globe Kababayan website: www.globe-kababayan.com.ph.



FCC BAGS TOP HONOR IN MUNTINLUPA

Filinvest Corporate City (FCC), home to Festival Supermall, Westgate Center, Southgate Complex, Northgate Cyber Zone, Spectrum Business District, Palms Country Club, Market Square and Corporate Woods was officially acknowledged as the Number One Taxpayer of Muntinlupa City Award during the 'Araw ng Muntinlupa' and 11th anniversary of Muntinlupa's Cityhood last March 1. The Top 11 Taxpayers Award is held annually by the administration of Mayor Jaime Fresnedi to recognize the support given by the business community to the city government's development programs. FCC has also been

especially supportive of the enhancement of education in Muntinlupa through the Erda Foundation headed by Fr. Pierre Tritz, SJ. Erda (Educational Research and Development) Foundation is devoted to helping less privileged school children of Muntinlupa. For the past three years, Filinvest Corporate City has always been included among the top five taxpayers of this City. Photo shows: Andrew Gotianun Jr., vice chair of Filinvest Land Inc with Mayor Jaime Fresnedi, Presidential Spokesperson Toting Bunye, former President Fidel Ramos and Vice Mayor Aldrin San Pedro during the awards rites.

First Life exec hailed industry leader

PETER G. COYIUTO, PRESIDENT AND CEO OF First Guarantee Life Assurance Co Inc (First Life), is elected for the second time as president of the Philippine Life Insurance Association (Plia), the umbrella organization of 35 life insurance companies in the country.

Achieving sustained growth for the industry remains the focus of the new Plia chief as he endeavors to aggressively address and pursue ongoing initiatives and to build major new competencies on such key issues as life insurance awareness, amendments of the Insurance Code and changes in the Code of Ethics, Risk-Based Capitalization (RBC), abolition of premium tax and administration, sale of tax-qualified retirement plans, and the concern on unlicensed insurance sellers.

The executive is open-minded about new opportunities amidst changes and challenges for the industry and hopes as much to strengthen the impact of life insurance in Filipinos' lives. The Plia head believes that heightened awareness of life insurance buyers bodes well for increasing premium growth in the future and envisions a continuum of life insurance protection that will be better appreciated by every Filipino family. Coyiuto also considers appropriate and transparent regulatory guidelines as a high priority for 2006 with the proposed changes in the Insurance Code and in the industry charter on ethics.

The Plia chief also holds that pursuit of growth requires capital and the risk-based re-insuring initiatives will have important implications. Tax reform looms large in this year's priorities set by the new Plia president as debate continues on the potential changes to, or repeal of, the premium tax. The illegal practice of unlicensed insurance sellers demands scrutiny with

the loss of tax revenues from such solicited business. Coyiuto is committed to help the Philippine economy thrive with the industry premium income that is translated to investments.

Coyiuto sits as chief officer of First Life, the strategic partner since 1996 of Swiss Life Insurance and Pension Co, the world's largest employee benefits network; and from 1997, the group insurance partner of Dai-ichi Mutual Life Insurance Co, Japan's second largest. He finished BSC Insurance & Accounting from the Wharton School of Business and Finance, University of Pennsylvania. He attained the Chartered Life Underwriter (CLU) designation, widely recognized as the highest level of studies in the life insurance profession, from the American college.

Coyiuto is also vice chair of Prudential Guarantee and Assurance Inc (PGA), the general insurance firm of the Coyiuto Group of Companies. Coyiuto is also past director for industry organizations such as the Life Insurance Marketing and Research Association (Limra) International, premier provider of research-based marketing insight and networking opportunities in financial services worldwide, and the Insurance Institute for Asia and the Pacific (IAP). He also now serves on the board of the Manila Polo Club and is a member of various local business organizations.

Other Plia officers for 2006 are Esther C. Tan of Sunlife, vice president; Estelito G. Madrid of Pru Life of UK, secretary; and Gregorio D. Mercado of Philippine Prudential Life, treasurer. Other directors are Emilio S. De Quiros Jr of Ayala Life, Armando C. Trinidad of Fortune Life, Benjamin C. Lim of United Life, Enrique R. Alberto of AsianLife Financial, and Jose C. Lee of Philippine International Life.

Hilti launches Hilti Lifetime Service package

HILTI, A WORLD LEADER WHEN IT COMES TO developing, manufacturing and marketing value-added, top-quality products for professional customers in the construction industry and building maintenance having 120 marketing organizations around the world, officially launched the best service ever offered in terms of guarantee coverage. Hilti Lifetime Service, the construction industry's optimal service package was formally introduced to the public. Since Jan. 1, Hilti in all over the world including Hilti (Philippines) Inc started to offer a service package that ensures maximum cost control for the industry, that is: (1) No costs for 1 year - ensures that customers incur no costs, with regard to service and repairs, for one year, depending on tool type. Hilti will cover all labor and repair costs involved in replacing defective parts, including parts subject to wear and tear, for one year after the date of purchase; (2) Lifetime repair cost - In case of a repair after the one-year period comes to an end, customers only pay a maximum of 30 percent of the corresponding list price of a new tool over the entire remaining life of the tool. In the unexpected case that a repaired tool once again breaks down within one month after a charged repair, Hilti will fix it for free; (3) Lifetime manufacturer's warranty - Hilti repairs or replaces all tools suffering defects from material or workmanship free of charge over the entire lifetime of the tool. Hilti assures that the service will be automatically enjoyed by the clients on their tool purchase - It is not necessary anymore to show proof of purchase or to pre-register a tool to obtain the Hilti Lifetime Service.



HYUNDAI E. RODRIGUEZ EXPANDS IN MANILA BAY

Recently, Hyundai Asia Resources Inc (Hari) formalized the dealership of Hyundai-Manila Bay with the same group that runs Hyundai-E. Rodriguez Sr. Avenue in Quezon City, headed by Ramon T. Goh. The Hyundai-Manila Bay showroom is

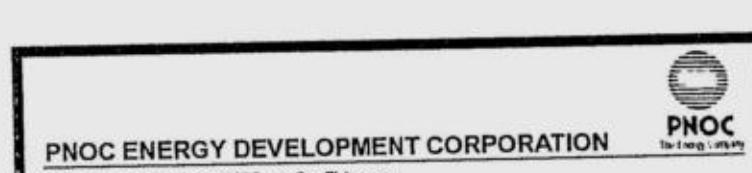
expected to open on the third quarter of 2006. Photo shows Ma. Fe P. Aguado, managing director of Hari; Bryan T. Lee, CEO of Hari; Ramon T. Goh, president of Wheels Inc; and Gordon Teng, managing consultant of Wheels Inc during the MOA signing.



5TH PAHIMIS COFFEE FESTIVAL OF AMADEO

Vice President Noli De Castro, together with Cavite Governor Ayong Maliks (3rd from right) and Amadeo Mayor Albert 'OJ' Ambagan Jr. (3rd from left), leads the coffee toast marking the formal opening of the 5th Pahimis Coffee Festival of Amadeo. Also in photo are (from

CLASSIFIEDS



INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

PNOC-Energy Development Corporation (PNOC-EDC) invites interested contractors registered with the Philippine Contractors Accreditation Board (PCAB) and classified, at least, as Category C and D, IAC Small, Sub-Category B, Specialty in Electrical Works or General Building - Building & Industrial Plant and have completed within the last ten (10) years at least one (1) supply, delivery, installation, testing and commissioning of electrical distribution system contract amounting to at least fifty percent (50%) of the approved budget. To apply for eligibility and to bid for the project:

SUPPLY, INSTALLATION, TESTING AND COMMISSIONING OF THE COTABATO EXPANDED RURAL ELECTRIFICATION PROJECT STAGE V, SCHEDULE 1 (7 BARANGAYS) EDC 06-024

The Approved Budget is PhP 6,070,541.55 chargeable against PNOC-EDC fund. The contract duration is 180 calendar days.

Application forms for eligibility and the bidding documents may be secured from the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group (c/o F.T. Tolosa local 5179) starting March 21, 2006 upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Pesos: One Thousand (PhP 1,000.00).

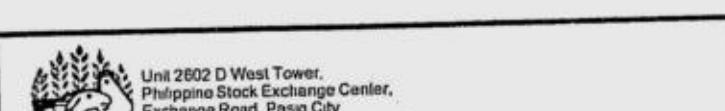
Site inspection is on April 3-6, 2006. For the purpose of clarifying certain issues, a pre-bid conference will be held on April 7, 2006 2:00 p.m. at the BAC Conference Room, First Floor, Building V, Energy Center, Merritt Road, Fort Bonifacio, Metro Manila.

Application for eligibility and sealed bids shall be received by the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group, First Floor, Building V, Energy Center, Merritt Road, Fort Bonifacio, Metro Manila not later than 2:00 p.m. (Contract Administration Group Office Wall Clock Time) of April 20, 2006 and shall be publicly opened immediately thereafter.

PNOC-EDC reserves the right to reject any or all bids or parts thereof, to waive any informality therein, to accept such bids or to award any part of the work to any bidder whose bid is considered most advantageous to PNOC-EDC.

The Chairman Bids and Awards Committee

(PNOC-March 21 & 28, 2006)



INVITATION TO ELIGIBLE BIDDERS TO BID

The National Agribusiness Corporation (NABCOR) now invites Bids from eligible Bidders for the establishment/installation of a corn processing facility at Osias Kabacan, North Cotabato in Region 12.

The contract duration is 90 days with Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) amounting to Thirteen Million and Five Hundred Thousand Pesos (PhP13,500,000.00).

Eligible bidder should possess the minimum level of experience in manufacturing similar type of GOODS (i.e. establishment of corn processing facilities for shelling and/or drying for at least 5 years).

The schedule of BAC activities is as follows:

BAC Activities	Schedule
1. Receipt from eligible bidders Letter of Intent (LOI) with accompanying evidences of eligibility	March 29, 2006 not later than 5:00 p.m.
2. Issuance of Bid Documents to Eligible Bidders	April 3, 2006
3. Pre-bid Conference	April 5, 2006, 2:00 p.m.
4. Receipt and Opening of Bids (Receipt of proposals (technical and financial) shall be an hour before the Opening of Bids)	April 18, 2006, Opening of Bids @ 9:00 a.m.

The eligible Bidder shall be determined using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria following the Eligibility Requirements indicated in the Terms of Reference (TOR). The TOR can be secured at the NABCOR's office.

All participants relative to the procurement process shall be governed by NABCOR's Policy and General Guidelines of Procurement of Goods.

The NABCOR assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of their bids.

Approved (Sgd.) MS. ROBEMA A. BOLIGOR BAC Chairman

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NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the MetroBank savings accounts of the late DIVINA B. PERALTA was adjudicated thru Extra-Judicial Settlement by her surviving heirs and shall be released thru S.P.A. Jesus B. Peralta as per Doc. No. 390, Page 77, Book IV, Series of 2006, of Notary Public Henry S. Banares, ARN 19348.

(PNB-March 14, 21 & 28, 2006)

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OBITUAR

TUESDAY, MARCH 28, 2006

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(As of March 27, 2006)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	10,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	36	36	35.5	35.5	952,200
Bank of the Phil. Islands	63	63.5	62.5	62.5	1,300
China Banking Corp.	19	19	19	19	300
Citystate Savings Bank	0.4	0.41	0.39	0.4	11,820,000
Export and Import Inc.	81.5	81.5	78	78	136,000
First PCI Bank Inc.	28.5	28.5	28.5	28.5	1,900
International Exch. Bank	40	40	38.5	38.5	904,500
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	36	36	35	35.5	54,000
Phil. Savings Bank	35	36	35	36	7,500
Rizal Commercial Banking Corp.	13.5	14	13.5	13.75	374,000
Security Bank Corp.	41	41	41	41	15,000
Union Bank of the Phil.	39.5	39.5	35.5	38.5	6,800
First Abacus Financial	0.5	0.55	0.5	0.55	2,930,000
First Metro Invest. Corp.	24	24.5	24	24.5	14,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	3200	3200	3200	3200	300
PCHI Fin. Inc.	1	1	1	1	80,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	150	153	150	153	8,300
Sun Life Financial Inc.	2145	2150	2145	2150	460
Vantage Corp.	0.85	0.89	0.85	0.88	13,630,000
First Gen Corp.	41.5	42.5	41.5	42.5	245,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	44	44.5	43.5	44.5	197,600
Manila Electric Co. A	13	13	13	13	66,600
Manila Electric Co. B	20.5	20.5	19.75	19.75	117,200
Manila Water Co. Inc.	6.5	6.5	6.4	6.5	5,308,000
Petrov Corp.	4.35	4.6	4.5	4.55	2,444,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	0.91	0.91	0.91	0.91	70,000
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.55	3.55	3.55	3.55	7,000
Jolibee Foods Corp.	38	38	37	37.5	88,400
RFM Corp.	0.7	0.7	0.69	0.69	520,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	2.5	2.5	2.4	2.44	1,215,000
San Miguel Corp. A	60	60.5	60	60.5	87,000
San Miguel Corp. B	81	82	81	82	33,000
Universal Robina Corp.	17.75	17.75	17.75	17.75	469,000
Vitarich Corp.	0.29	0.29	0.25	0.25	1,220,000
Southeast Asian Cement	0.32	0.32	0.3	0.3	1,560,000
Engineering Equip. Inc.	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.25	3,321,000
Polimex Philippines Inc.	4.2	4.2	4.1	4.2	423,000
Phil. Cont'l. Const. Corp.	3.1	3.15	3.1	3.15	20,000
CHEMICALS	1.26	1.26	1.26	1.26	10,000
Corro-Coat Inc.	3.05	3.05	3	3	1,593,000
Global Equities Inc.	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07	2,800,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.075	3,000,000
Steniel Manufacturing	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	100,000
Ayala Corp.	362.5	365	362.5	362.5	233,300
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.51	0.51	0.51	0.51	410,000
Abotiz Equity Ventures	4.5	5.1	4.95	5.1	918,000
Ad Net Holdings Inc.	0.024	0.024	0.023	0.023	10,500,000
A. Saito Corp.	2.44	2.46	2.44	2.44	1,047,000
APC Group Inc.	0.245	0.245	0.23	0.235	7,720,000
Atul Phil Holdings Corp.	0.9	0.95	0.89	0.89	2,460,000
ATR Holdings Inc.	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	28,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	8.6	8.6	8.6	8.6	10,000
Bengrus Holdings Corp.	1.02	1.02	1	1	4,797,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	3.05	3.05	3	3	1,593,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	3.15	3.15	3	3	687,000
Global Business Hldgs Inc.	55	55	55	55	20,000
House of Investments Inc.	1.24	1.24	1.24	1.24	1,272,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	6.1	6.1	6	6	660,000
Mabuhay Holdings Corp.	0.19	0.2	0.18	0.18	510,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	0.28	0.28	0.26	0.26	9,900,000
Pacifica	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.012	4,650,000
Prime Grp. Phils. Inc.	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	7,000
Republiq Glass Hldgs Corp.	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	12,000,000
Simphol Corp.	0.145	0.15	0.145	0.15	39,120,000
SM Investments Corp.	228	230	228	230	146,210
South China Resources Inc.	0.62	0.62	0.62	0.62	60,000
Seafront Resources Corp.	0.54	0.54	0.54	0.54	20,000
Union Res. & Holdings Co.	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	3,850,000
Weltex Industries Inc.	0.135	0.135	0.13	0.13	1,331,500
PROPERTY	10.75	11.05	11	11	250,000
Ayala Land Inc.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	25,970,000
Araneta Properties Inc.	1.56	1.18	1.1	1.18	7,030,000
Belle Corp.	0.3	0.3	0.29	0.29	902,000
Crown Equities Inc.	1.9	1.9	1.84	1.84	274,000
G & P Homes Inc.	1.92	1.92	1.72	1.72	20,000
Cebu Prop. Vent B	1	1	1	1	2,000,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.225	0.225	0.22	0.22	72,280,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.67	0.7	0.67	0.68	6,000,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.033	0.033	0.03	0.03	6,000,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	0.71	0.72	0.69	0.71	690,000
Filmwest Land Inc.	1.36	1.36	1.28	1.3	8,129,000
Gotesco Land Inc. B	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07	100,000
Highlands Prime Inc.	3.5	3.5	3.3	3.3	60,000
Interport Res. B	0.005	0.005	0.005	0.005	12,000,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.23	0.235	0.225	0.225	3,790,000
Phil-Era Corp.	0.57	0.58	0.57	0.58	1,830,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	1.54	1.58	1.5	1.52	16,773,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.35	0.36	0.34	0.35	38,310,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.32	0.32	0.28	0.28	1,470,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	8.1	8.1	8	8	559,000
Phil. Realty and Holdings	0.33	0.35	0.32	0.32	7,860,000
SM Development Corp.	1.58	1.64	1.56	1.58	48,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	7.8	7.9	7.8	7.9	2,683,000
Univitol Holdings Inc.	0.15	0.155	0.145	0.145	3,320,000
MEDIA	12	12	11.25	11.75	31,000
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	1.38	1.38	1.34	1.34	108,000
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp.	3.05	3.1	3	3	574,000
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	1.04	1.06	1.02	1.02	12,617,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	885	885	885	885	6,560
Philippine Tel. Corp.	3.05	3.1	3	3	59,100
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1870	1880	1870	1880	1,500
IONICS Inc.	1.28	1.28	1.28	1.28	1,400,000
ISLAND Info & Tech Corp.	0.047	0.047	0.047	0.047	100,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.025	0.025	0.025	0.025	48,000
Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.12	1.12	1.12	1.12	50,600,000
Philweb Corp.	0.023	0.022	0.022	0.022	20,000
ASIAN TERMINALS Inc.	2	2.1	2	2.08	302,000
INT'L Container Term's V	11	11.25	11	11	2,005,100
Acesite Phils Hotel Corp.	3.55	3.55	3.3	3.3	867,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	1.84	1.86	1.84	1.84	468,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	410,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.46	0.49	0.46	0.47	5,870,000
IPeople Inc.	3.25	3.25	3.2	3.2	182,000
Macrosia Corp.	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	110,000
Paxys Inc.	8.8	8.8	8.7	8.7	186,000
Philippine Seven Corp.	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	5,000
MINING	1.16	1.16	1.1	1.1	401,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	1.16	1.16	1.1	1.14	550,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	1.34	1.34	1.3	1.34	102,

BUSINESS

Gov't may lower lending rates for traders

WB initiates effort to rebuild Mindanao

THE WORLD BANK (WB) HAS SECURED at least \$52.7 million from foreign donors for a new trust fund that will be used to sustain socio-economic recovery efforts in Mindanao's war-torn parts, as well as promote good local government throughout the country.

Phase one of the WB-administered Mindanao Trust Fund-Reconstruction and Development Program was launched yesterday in Cotabato City, with the governments of Australia, Canada, New Zealand and Sweden joining the WB in contributing seed money, the World Bank said in a statement.

With the MTF-RDP, the multilateral lender pools the resources of several international partners to harmonize support for Mindanao.

The grants will be used to help build the capacity of the Bangsamoro Development Agency (BDA), local government units and other service provider agencies, initiate a few projects, and establish the organizational set-up for implementation of sub-projects in strife-torn areas on the island.

"Total funding for Phase 1 of the MTF is

more than \$2.7 million," said Joachim von Amsberg, WB Philippines country director. "Such funding is significant and strategic, but small compared to the overall needs. However, capacity building in Phase 1 will unlock international support in Phase 2 of around \$50 million or more."

"That program in turn can unleash even greater social and economic benefits that Mindanao can experience through lasting peace," von Amsberg said. "Mindanao has great potential for rapid development if different groups can begin to trust each other, find agreements, and, together, focus on the development of Mindanao, especially those areas that have been affected by armed conflict."

Several additional international partners are expected to contribute to phase 2 of the program, the WB said.

With prospects for peace between the MILF and the government significantly improving, the World Bank saw fit to establish a multi-donor trust fund that would support post-conflict reconstruction and development.

Doris C. Dumla

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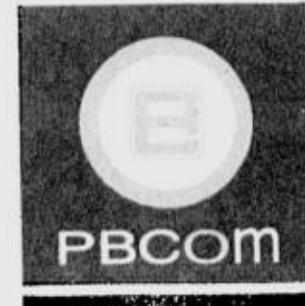
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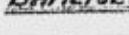
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DOF rallies GFIs to aid battered exporters

By Doris C. Dumla

perk up their borrowing appetite.

"We're successful in continuously bringing down the deficit," he said. "That should have an effect on interest rates. We hope to help exporters because what they really need is working capital."

"What we can do is start off with the GFIs. If the GFIs can do it, we will have the moral ascendancy to revive this with the BAP."

Teves said GFIs, such as the Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP) and the DBP, could bring down interest rates by narrowing the spread over benchmark T-bill rates, or by bringing down their administrative costs.

"Exporters can borrow at lower rates, then it could help those suffering from lower margins," Teves said.

When asked what the government is doing to ease the plight of the battered sector, Teves said: "We're trying our best to address (the exporters') concerns, but it's difficult to make promises."

Investment bank UBS said Philippine bank lending may be bottoming out from post-Asian crisis depression, and could rise by 8-10 percent this year as an improved business climate perks up corporate expansion.

"We think future loan growth will have to be corporate-led, as the government's fiscal reform program sets



TEVES

the stage for a more conducive investment climate," UBS said.

UBS said the country's loan-to-GDP ratio had jumped from 30 to 67 percent during a period of economic reform from 1992 to 1997, when foreign investment policies were liberalized. This has fallen back to 37 percent as bad assets piled up when the currency crisis broke out, compounded by fiscal deficit concerns over the economy.

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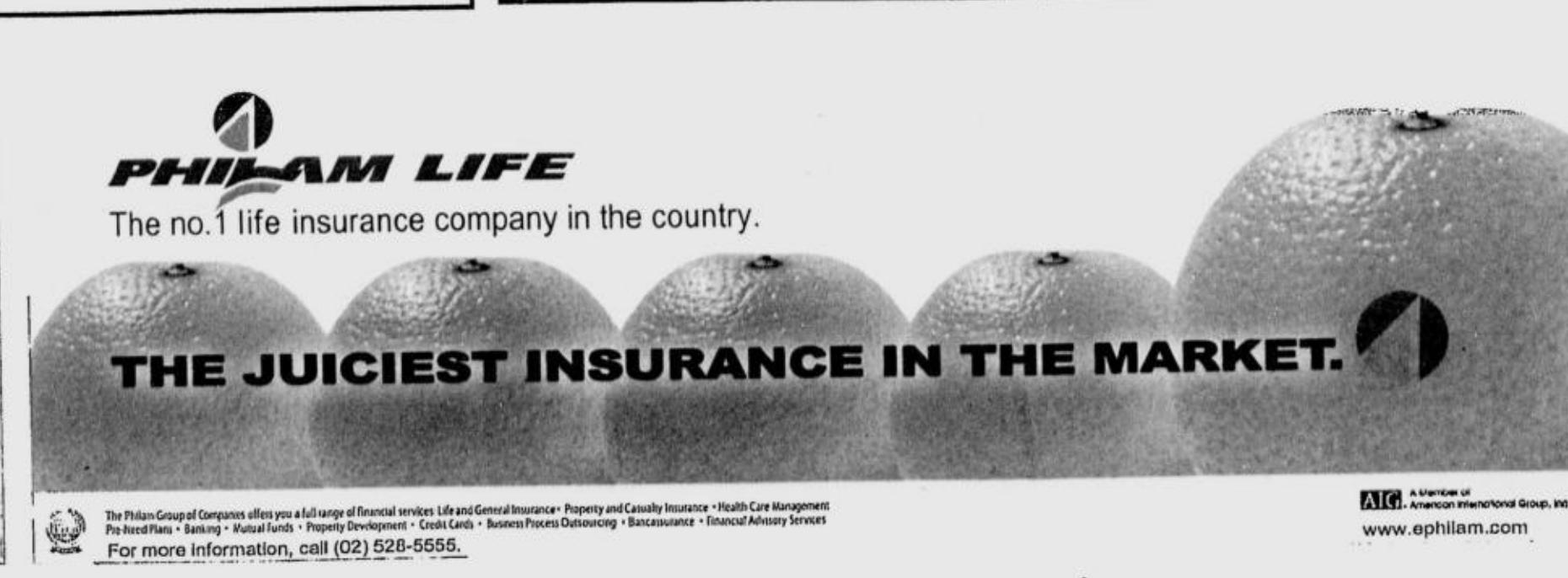
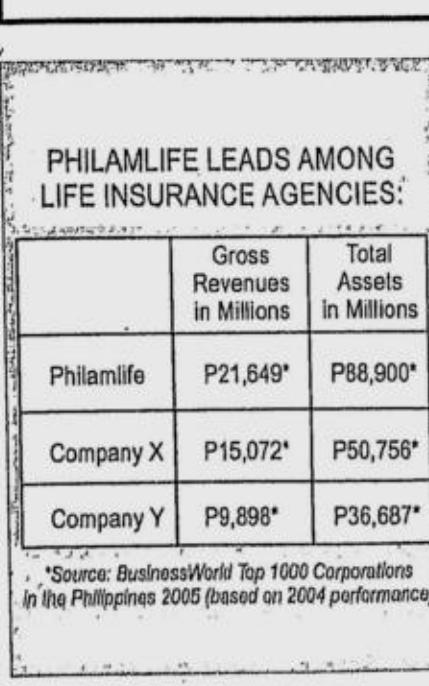
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When a woman loves a man

By Anne A. Jambora

LET'S TALK ABOUT SEX. NOT the dizzying whirlwind yarns in cheap romantic paperbacks, but a medical condition that has been whispered about at private gatherings.

While it's true that the number of men seeking treatment for erectile dysfunction (ED) is slowly on the rise (no pun intended), a far greater number choose to cloak their shame in silence. According to data collected by the Scrip World Pharmaceutical News in 2002, of the 152 million ED sufferers worldwide only 15-20 percent is being treated. By 2025, the number of men with ED is expected to double at 322 million.

Dubbed as the last taboo subject on earth, ED, otherwise known as impotence, is the inability to achieve or maintain an erection hard enough for a successful penetration. Although most men experience some form of ED in their lifetime—and that is normal—a persistent ED that lingers longer than two months needs medical attention.

Bayer, makers of the ED drug Levitra (Vardenafil), launched the campaign "Strike Up A Conversation" with model-actress Jerry Hall as ambassador. The Asia campaign that took off in Shanghai, China, aims to get the women to encourage their male partners to openly discuss ED and get professional help.

Hall, who used to be married to rock

star Mick Jagger, admitted to having "run across ED" in her life. Since a man often found it hard to initiate a conversation on a delicate topic, she said it was important for a woman to be sensitive and sympathetic.

A 2005 study in Asia headed by Malaysian urologist Dr. Hui Meng Tan, secretary general of the Asia Pacific Society for Impotence Research, revealed that 67 percent of the men treated were influenced by their partners to consult doctors.

"Erectile dysfunction is more than about a penis and a pill. It is interpersonal relationship meets biology, affecting sexuality and psychology," said William Fisher. The professor of psychology, obstetrics and gynecology at the University of Western Ontario, Canada was among the experts who talked at the launch.

Although sex is the most intimate physical expression of love, and intimacy is essential in every relationship, it is not the end all and be all. Sexual physician Dr. John Dean, secretary of the European Society for Sexual Medicine, said if ED caused misery to couples it was time to get some help.

"Men usually talk when they think the relationship is in danger," said Siegfried Meryn, medical director of the Center for Advanced Medical Education and Health Communication at the Medical University in Vienna, Austria.

Ian Eardley, a consultant urologist at St. James University Hospital Leeds, said men with ED could seek consultation as

Model-actress Jerry

Hall was in China
to encourage women
to talk their partners
into getting help
about erectile
dysfunction

early as three months or as late as 20 years. Meryn added that on the average it took a man four years before he'd begin to look for solutions to any health-related issues.

And this is where their partners come in. "Women are the communication experts in the family, in bed or outside," said Hall.

She encouraged women to talk with their partners. "Talk about how it makes you both feel and then go and speak to a doctor."

Physical causes

Meryn also cautioned: "It's not just a question of whether I want to have sex or not. ED is a symptom of a more serious medical condition."

Diabetes, cardiovascular disorders, multiple sclerosis, kidney disease, chronic alcoholism, chronic lung and liver diseases, vascular disease, neurological disease, spinal cord injury, high cholesterol, substance abuse, excessive smoking and hypertension are some of the physical causes of ED.

Some prescription drugs such as anti-histamines, tranquilizers, blood pressure drugs, sleeping aids, antidepressants, pain killers and appetite suppressants can produce ED as a side effect.

If a man had a heart condition or hypertension he was twice likely to acquire ED, said Dr. Dennis Serrano, urologist at the Asian Hospital and Medical Center in Alabang. If he is diabetic he more than doubles his risk.

ED is not a natural process of aging, but lifestyle choices do contribute to its occurrence. "Don't smoke. Exercise and eat healthy to preserve your sexual functions," Serrano said.

The nonphysical causes of ED involve



"IT IS important to remember that ED can have a negative effect on the self-confidence of the woman, too," Jerry Hall says.

psychological problems such as stress, anxiety, fatigue and depression, or negative feelings expressed by the partner such as lack of interest or resentment.

Physical and psychological causes often interact. Worrying over whether one can attain an erection only worsens an already established ED, no matter how mild the actual condition may be.

Although it doesn't work for everyone, the most popular treatment is oral medication.

Bayer's Levitra, according to Eardley, demonstrated 87 percent effective for successful penetration on the first at-



DR. SHOWLINE Chang, Dr. Hui Meng Tan, Dr. Ian Eardley, model-actress and Bayer's ED ambassador Jerry Hall

Promo mechanics

CHALLENGE THE BERT LOZADA

Swim School (BLSS) and its Instructors to cure you of your fear of water! This BLSS and Philippine Daily Inquirer promo can win you free swimming lessons. Here's how to join:

1. The promo is open to all INQUIRER readers in Metro Manila.

2. In 500 words or less (short bond paper, double-space, 10-point typeface), tell us how much you fear the water and why you would like to conquer that fear.

3. Cut out this promo mechanics box (photocopy not allowed) and send with your entry. Include the following information: name, age, home and office addresses, home and office telephone numbers, e-mail address, occupation, mobile number and birth date.

Entries should be sent to: INQUIRER Lifestyle Promo-Help me Conquer My Fear Philippine Daily Inquirer Bldg. Don Chino Roces Ave. Corner Yague and Mascardo Sts. Makati; or any Speedo Concept Store.

Deadline for submission of entries is 6 p.m., Tuesday, April 18. Winners will be announced April 25.

3. Fifteen winners will be chosen by a panel composed of representatives of BLSS and INQUIRER. Each will get free swimming lessons under BLSS' Confidence Booster Swimming Program and free swimsuit and gear from Speedo.

4. The month-long swimming class will be conducted in May. Venue and exact dates will be announced later.

5. Prizes may be claimed from the INQUIRER Marketing Department April 25-May 5. Call 8978808 loc. 259 or 263.

DO YOU HAVE HYDROPHOBIA?

No we are not talking about the fear of water resulting from rabies but rather the fear of getting into a body of water—shallow or deep—like a pool, a river or the sea.

Despite the Philippines' consisting of 7,100 islands, many Filipinos have a fear of water that keeps them from learning to swim.

It is not simply because they do not want to get sunburned or to ruin a complicated "do" kept in place by a whole can of spray net.

They are simply terrified that any attempt to swim will have them sinking to the bottom like a rock.

Now, the Bert Lozada Swim School (BLSS) offers a program that they are certain will make scaredy-cats take to the water like fish, so they can learn to swim.

The Confidence Booster Program (CBP) is an adult program specifically designed to help people lessen and eventually overcome their fear of water. Once this fear is conquered, learning how to swim will be easier.

The program will also improve stamina as well as help people lose weight.

The program consists of 12 one-hour sessions.

BLSS noted that many people went through life feeling embarrassed about their inability to swim. Though they would enroll their children in swimming lessons and give them the encouragement they needed, they themselves would not even try to learn to float.

Many developed their phobia from swimming classes in the '60s and '70s when they were introduced to the activity by being pushed into the deep end of a pool. The sink-or-swim technique made many people reluctant to take the plunge again.

Through CBP, BLSS is confident even people who had a "traumatic" experience, will be able to conquer their fear and be comfortable in the water.

What can BLSS teach that others have not covered before? How will it succeed where others failed?

BLSS said it was because "we teach control: once you have it, you are no longer worried about your safety. You then have the presence of mind to learn mechanics."

Once the learner had control of the situation, learning the skills of swimming would become natural and easy, according to BLSS. People's No. 1 goal, it said, was to feel at ease in the water, to be in control both in shallow and deep water, not just be able to do the strokes gracefully.

"What [people] learn from our classes are ease and control... Once you learn them, the skills 'just come,'" BLSS stressed.

CBP tries to eliminate the reasons for fear of water—fear of the unknown, fear of suffocation, fear of drowning.

"When you are taught at your level and your questions are answered, you have fun and will feel safe at all times. Once you are at ease in the pool, shallow and deep, you may then want to learn to enjoy the other bodies of water like the lake, beach and ocean," BLSS added.

In a CBP class, the instructor starts each session with an hour or so of group therapy. Students are assigned reading and exercises from a workbook. They sit in a circle and talk about their fears, scary experiences, excuses they give to avoid the water.

Classes combine dry land sessions with in-pool exercises to gradually strengthen a student's confidence. BLSS said classes were fun and easy and the water in the pool used for the lessons was warm.

At the end of the 12 sessions, students are expected to:

1. Be confident in water, shallow and deep.

2. Say goodbye to panicky feelings as a result of the increased feeling of safety anywhere in the pool and, later, in the ocean.

The lessons will also make them safer in the water whether they are alone or with family and friends.

BLSS is the only swim school in the Philippines that teaches adults who have fear of water.

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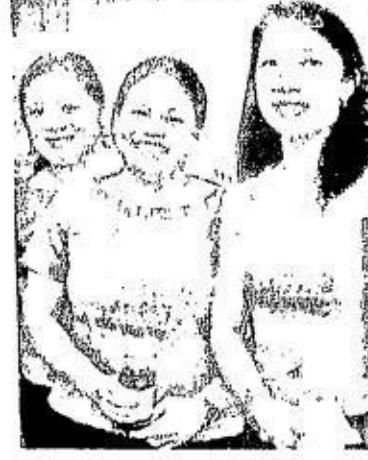
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WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Maurice Arcache
Photos by Alex Van Hagen using Kodak EasyShare system



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HOT lovers: Jackie Inoferio and Jacques Dupasquier



BRYANBOY with Marco Antonio and Jenni Epperson



RUSTAN'S Mariko Jacinto and close pal, PLDT's David Nugent



LEX LEDESMA and brilliant Shu Uemura gal Tina Tinio

THE AIR FRANCE-KLM HAS A new eye-catching home on the 39th floor of the luxurious RCBC Plaza, Ayala corner Gil Puyat Avenues, in the heart of Makati's Business District. It has 26 employees from four different departments.

The new regional office for South China Sea, including Malaysia and Brunei, has Ihab Sorial as general manager, *palanggas*. Jorrit van Opstall is the new financial controller for the region.

Apres a brief introduction to the main man by the airline's brilliant secret weapon, marketing manager Bingo Braganza, we got down to the business of the afternoon.

Eloquent Ihab Sorial explained that "as a sign of how the management believes in the potential of the Philippine market, we have invested in daily, nonstop flights to cater to the constantly increasing number of passengers flying to Europe. KLM is the only carrier in the country that flies nonstop from the Philippines to Europe. [Its newest] state-of-the-art aircraft, Boeing 777, flies the Manila-Amsterdam route. And KLM's regular daily flights are always full."

The airline's GM added, "Our valued customers did show great confidence and support by flying Air France-KLM, thus positioning KLM as the No. 1 carrier in terms of market share from Manila to Europe."

Next came Bingo Braganza, who explained, "By coincidence, today, in this thank-you *merienda* for the press, we are also celebrating one year of being together, Air France/KLM Manila." He continued, "Why is KLM No. 1?" then offered the following reasons:

1. Nobody else flies nonstop—the fastest way—to Europe;
2. Best network in the market, with Air France;
3. Customers get to use laptops, make calls during the flight and on the ground;
4. It's the first time in the industry that two airlines are sharing one program—the Flying Blue Card that links to our local tourist attractions and offers endless possibilities as a Frequent Flyer scheme.

Together, these leading airlines, KLM and Air France, are developing the best staff to deliver the best service!

This is KLM/Air France's commitment to all of us, the traveling public.

Then it was time to party. We joined the whole KLM staff and munched on the super yummy variety of afternoon snacks, with wine to wash them down, excellently catered by the one and only

For more info, do call Air France/KLM reservation office at 8871202.



AIR FRANCE-KLM hotshots Joey Laurente, Jorrit van Opstall, dashing Ihab Sorial, and Bingo Braganza



TRISH de Ocampo, Ula Escudero and Maritel Campillo

A French-Dutch 'home' opens



SOUTHERN beauty Dindin Monserrate



ONE year of togetherness: Air France and KLM celebrate.



MOI with Celine Lopez



JACKIE Ramos, Michelle Casas, Roland Rubio, Myda Mercado, Dianne de la Cruz, Michael Go and Emily Tagalog



JACKIE Antonio



INTERIOR decorator Miguel Rosales



JOANNA Tan, Minette Quimson, Joan Doromal, Arlene Almario, Beth Marquez



GIPPY Tantoco and architect Chut Cuerva

Via Mare, *naturellement*.

Check out, *palanggas*, the tons of cool promos Air France and KLM have lined up for the year.

For more info, do call Air France/KLM reservation office at 8871202.

Hey, it's summer time,

dahlings... have bag, will travell

Man in black

Writer, gourmand and gentleman for all seasons DJ Montano added yet another fab year to his young age, blowing a single candle from his yummy cake, *palanggas*.

As last year's theme for his bash was white, this year he opted for black, throwing a black-themed dinner party. He asked his pals to come in, what else? Mafia black, dahlings!

Naturellement, the hard-to-beat L'Opera at the Fort Strip, DJ and moi's favorite Italian resto, was the setting for the get-together with his closest pals. The gals breezed in in outfits inspired by "The Godfather" movies, and the gentlemen looked like mafiosos.

Needless to say, we had to kiss the "Godfather's" bejeweled pinkie as we entered.

Sultry, extremely bright beauty Abba Napa, the darling and *tres charmant* proprietor of L'Opera, personally supervised the *tres delicious* dinner. She had the chef prepare a special menu that would please any Godfather.

So the food rolled in—there was the to-die-for Duck-filled Ravioli in Truffle Sauce; Fillet of Beef Tenderloin in Porcini Sauce with grilled vegetables (which I didn't touch); Grilled Whole Lobster in Orange Sauce served with Steamed Asparagus and Spinach; plus tons of other yummies that had most of us saying "Stop!" *Natch*, what's a bash without our all-time favorite bubbly, the cool Moet en Chandon champagne that seemed to flow endlessly?

Yes, man for all seasons DJ Montano is one awesome person, dahlings

Bejeweled

Shu Uemura, Motorola and Smart Infinity—three luxury brands at the forefront of beauty, technology and service—have come together for another fabulous stunning collaboration, "Bejeweled."

Celebrating the launch of Shu Uemura Tokyo and Motorola's newest must-have handset, the *tres chic* Motorazr V3i, young and talented Carissa Oledan Coscoluelua created a gorgeous limited-edition jewel-encrusted false lashes and Motorazr V3i phones to be unveiled tonight. The first project of its kind in the world, dahlings, the collection is exclusive to the Philippines.

Are spirit possessions and exorcisms true?

FRANCIS M. SANGALANG, A 28-YEAR-old overseas Filipino engineer in Dubai, sent in a number of questions regarding spirit possession and exorcism.

He said he doubted stories of such things until he had a personal encounter with the phenomenon in 1997. His own girlfriend got possessed!

When she moved into an apartment in Angeles City, according to Francis, she fell ill and developed a high fever. Francis was with her throughout the ordeal. She woke up and, for no reason, started talking nonsense. She was telling Francis, "Your girlfriend is gone and what's left is only her body."

Francis thought she was joking or having a hallucination due to her high fever, but when he checked her temperature it was normal. When she started hurting herself and Francis, he realized something out of the ordinary was happening. He tried to stop her but he couldn't. He even slapped her face but she only laughed.

Then Francis remembered to pray the Lord's Prayer, which he learned from his Catholic schooling at the University of

the Assumption in Pampanga was the most powerful prayer. After a few minutes, she calmed down and became her old self again.

Francis provided the following details about his girlfriend before he enumerated his questions.

"She had a bad childhood. She was abandoned by her parents when she was around 7. Since childhood, she had supported herself. She was raised by her relatives. I know deep in her heart she keeps a level of hatred for her parents."

Questions

Now here are Francis' questions:

1. Are exorcism and possession of elementals or spirits true?

2. What are the factors that make a person susceptible to such phenomenon?

3. Was what happened to her connected to the new place she moved into?

4. When she regained her true self, she felt cold and her palms and feet were a bit numb. Did these have any connection with her ordeal? She didn't

INNER AWARENESS

Jaime T. Licauco

remember a single thing about what happened, not even the fact that I slapped her face.

5. Is there any way to prevent such kind of experience?

6. If it happens, is there any way to stop or eject the possessing spirit?

Answers

Here are my brief answers to your questions.

1. Yes, there is such a thing as spirit possession and the process of getting rid of a negative spirit is called exorcism. Even the Christian Bible contains examples of spirit possession and exorcism. In fact, there are Christian priests

trained as exorcists. It is a power or function granted by the bishop. During the medieval era, there were many stories of spirit possessions recorded by the Catholic Church.

2. Many factors make a person susceptible to possession. One is being in a place or house with negative spirits. A person who is highly negative also attracts negative entities. Another factor is a weak will. Still another is a weak physical constitution.

Sometimes curiosity about these things and playing with the spirit-of-the-glass can encourage possession. Persons who have mediumistic tendencies or are highly sensitive to psychic forces are also prone to possession.

3. Yes, I believe the apartment your girlfriend moved into is inhabited by negative spirits, either of the dead or elementals.

4. She felt cold and numb because her mind or consciousness was dislodged forcibly by the spirit who took over her body temporarily. She was in deep trance and therefore her blood circulation slowed down. She didn't remember

anything because "she wasn't there" as the possessing spirit told you. It took over her body.

5. Yes, it can be prevented by saying power words or *oracion* of protection, by sincere prayer and calling the higher divine entities, and by placing protective religious objects empowered to protect against demonic possession, such as the powerful St. Benedict's Medal. One should also avoid going to places haunted or inhabited by spirits.

6. If it happens, you have to call a knowledgeable and trained *espirituista* or exorcist or someone with the power to expel the negative spirit from the body of a possessed individual. Do not attempt to do the exorcism yourself because the possessing entity can transfer to you and harm you.

For inquiries on books, paranormal services and seminars on Inner Mind Development, ESP and Intuition Development, and "Soulnates, Karma & Reincarnation" conducted by this writer, call 8107245, 8926806 or fax 8159890. E-mail inner-awareness_2005@yahoo.com



The new procedure is less invasive and menacing



DR. VICKI Belo and her star client

BY GETTING "smart," Ara Mina is now able to show off a new figure.

By Alex Y. Vergara

DOCTOR TO THE STARS" Vicki Belo introduced recently a supposedly gentler, "smarter" and less bloody alternative to existing liposuction procedures.

Belo found a willing endorser in Ara Mina. She has been itching to do Mina's arms since seven years ago.

But before the sexy star, now 26, finally agreed to it late last year, she did some research on the Internet. She chose Smartlipo over the traditional form of liposuction.

Smartlipo does away with the more invasive and menacing cannula (a tube-like tool injected into the flesh and works like a vacuum, suctioning excess blubber) used in the traditional procedure. Instead, it uses a form of laser called Nd:Yag, which, with the help of the latest fiber optic technology, zeroes in directly on unwanted subcutaneous (beneath the skin) fat.

The melted fat, in turn, is drained from the body over a period of three to four months via the person's lymphatic system. To hasten the process, a patient can opt to undergo a series of Lipolite sessions a week or so after the main procedure.

No risk

"Undergoing Smartlipo entails virtually no risks in the hands of an experienced doctor," Belo says. "A beam of light acts as our guide as we work on the patient's superficial layer of fat."

Doctors have yet to find a way to get around unsightly incisions. But this time, says Belo, they're hardly noticeable compared to bigger incisions that result from the old form of liposuction.

As an added bonus, those who underwent

Smart way to lose fat

Smartlipo reportedly experienced less bruising than those who had the traditional procedure.

Only Mesotherapy (a.k.a. Mesolipo), which does away with incisions and uses instead a cocktail of chemicals to melt away fat, is less invasive. Unfortunately, says Belo, results from Mesolipo are inconsistent since they're dependent on certain genetic factors.

"People react differently depending on how thick their respective cell walls are," she explains. "That's why results from Mesolipo are inconsistent."

During the three-hour Smartlipo procedure, Belo, apart from working on her star client's upper arms, also zapped fat in her upper back or wings (the culprit behind unsightly bulges under her bra) and love handles.

"I consider Ara's lower back, which I carved out a little, my work of art," says Belo.

Shorter downtime

Mina was sedated throughout the procedure. She later felt mild to moderate pain hours after waking up. In her case, downtime was less than a day. She was up and about the next evening attending a show-biz function.

"I experienced slight bruising during the first week," she says. "The affected areas were a bit swollen and firm on the second and third weeks. By the end of the fourth week everything looked okay."

She didn't have to wait a month to see the results. Praises from friends and strangers came her way two weeks after undergoing the procedure. Colleagues demanded to know her secret, while fans were surprised to find out she wasn't that hefty in person after all.

Television is to blame for the "extra bulk." Most stars, including Mina, attest that the medium can instantly add 10 pounds even to the slimmest celebrity.

With her new figure, the actress can now slip into the most skin-tight outfits with confidence. She can also wear again her old clothes, which felt a bit tight only a few months ago.

"I used to go on and off to the gym before the procedure," she says. "I haven't had the chance to go back because of my crazy schedule. But now that my body has fully recovered, I really intend to exercise regularly."

Which is just as well, says Belo. Like all medical procedures in her arsenal for weight management and control, Smartlipo is no magic bullet. What it does offer a client is a fresh start as well as an incentive to eat right and work out to maintain her new body.

E-mail the author at avgara@inquirer.com.ph.



THIS robot-like machine zaps away fat via the latest laser and fiberoptic technology.

EXERCISE OF THE WEEK

The chair



THIS YOGA-INSPIRED exercise strengthens the thighs, buttocks, lower back and ankles. It stretches and strengthens the shoulders.

Equipment:

None

Exercise technique:

1. Stand with feet together (big toes touching) and arms at your side. Inhale.

2. Exhale as you bend your knees and bring your buttocks backward as if you are about to sit on a chair while simultaneously raising your arms forward.

3. Keep on breathing while you hold for the desired length of time.

Performance tips:

1. Keep your chest lifted and your belly button slightly pulled in.

2. If your shoulders are very flexible, bring your arms upward in line with your ears.

3. Distribute your weight evenly over the front and back of your feet.

4. If you feel unstable with your feet together, take your legs slightly apart.

Repetitions: Hold for three to five breaths.

A SURVEY ASKED WOMEN to rate their worst menopausal symptoms.

The results were: anxiety, 26 percent; hot flashes, 24 percent; mood swings, 22 percent; insomnia, 16 percent; and night sweats, 13 percent. Other inconvenient symptoms are memory loss and urinary incontinence.

Exercise may or may not help some of these annoying symptoms. Some studies have found beneficial effects of exercise while others have found no change in symptoms.

Each woman is different. But since exercise improves many other aspects of health and well-being, working out is always to your advantage if you are a woman in midlife.

Depression, mood swings

Many studies have shown that exercise can work as well as an antidepressant for mild to moderate cases of depression and anxiety. This may be because exercise increases production of endorphins and phenylethylamine (PEA).

Endorphins are feel-good chemicals, similar to opium. They decrease anxiety, increase feelings of euphoria, improve pain tolerance, and help control appetite. PEA is a natural stimulant related to amphetamines.

According to Sabrena Newton of the American Council on Exercise, the mood-enhancing effect of exercise is "continuous as long as the woman is involved in a regular, consistent exercise program. If the woman exercises most days of the week at the recommended intensities, she should have relief even on the days she doesn't exercise."

Unbalanced hormonal levels during menopause can affect serotonin, a brain chemical that influences sleep, appetite, mood and sex drive. Low levels of serotonin are associated with depression. Exercise, especially repetitive rhythmic activities like walking and aerobic dance, may help because

WELL AND GOOD

Tina Juan



it increases serotonin production.

Exercise takes your mind off your problems and can make you feel like you can face those problems with confidence. If you exercise with other people, the social aspect can also lift mood and decrease anxiety.

Hot flashes

Hot flashes (during the day) or night sweats (usually during the first half of the night) is a sudden rush of heat to the head, neck and chest that produces profuse perspiration. This can sometimes be followed by a chilling sensation as the body tries to regain normal temperature.

Only 10 percent of women in countries like Japan, Mexico and Pakistan experience hot flashes compared to 65 percent of women from western countries. A diet high in phytoestrogens or plant sources of estrogen (found in more than 300 plant foods like soy, apples, and bean sprouts) may account for the low incidence of hot flashes in non-Western countries.

Increased physical activity levels may also play a role. A Swedish study found that post-menopausal women (between 52 and 54 years) who had no hot flashes were exercising 3.5 hours a week. Those who exercised less were more likely to experience the bothersome condition.

Declining estrogen levels lead to a decrease in endorphins which, aside from enhancing mood, are also associated with temperature control. Since exercise increases endorphins, this may explain how working out can help relieve hot flashes.

Slow deep breathing may also be beneficial. A study by research psychologists found that slow abdominal breathing or "paced respiration" done twice a day reduced the frequency of hot flashes by 40 percent. According to the Mayo Clinic, slow breathing might also provide some relief if done when you feel a hot flash coming.

Memory loss

According to the website on Alternative Medicine for Menopause, "Regular exercise may also have a significant effect on our mental agility by increasing the amount of oxygen supplied to the brain. In a comparison of sedentary older women and older women who got regular exercise, after four months the exercising group processed information faster in tests. This effect of exercise is particularly marked in older people."

Urinary incontinence

"Urinary stress incontinence" occurs when you sneeze, cough or laugh and urine involuntarily leaks out. It usually happens because the muscles of the pelvic floor or the muscles that surround your urinary and genital organs have become flabby with age or were previously weakened by childbirth.

Some women stop being physically active fearing embarrassment when urine leaks out when they exercise.

A simple exercise called the kegel can prevent and treat stress incontinence. A kegel is performed by contracting and relaxing the pelvic floor muscles, which is similar to what you do if you want to stop the flow of urine.

Initially, try contracting for five seconds and releasing for five. Do 10 repetitions, three times a day. When you have mastered that, increase the holding time to 10 seconds. You can also practice "quick kegels"—rapidly contract and release doing 50 repetitions. Do your kegels while sitting, standing or lying down.

Visit www.tinajuanfitness.info



ONE of the hottest players in the US Tennis Open, Kim Clijsters with Giorgio Borruso of Fila USA

Art finds place in sport

THE UNION OF ART AND sport will be showcased in Fila's new store that will soon open in the Mall of Asia in Manila.

Patterned after the flagship Madison store, it aims to exemplify what Fila calls "l'arte nello sport."

Fila's store at 340 Madison Avenue, a block away from New York's Grand Central Station, has become a brand new fashion landmark in the Big Apple.

The structure seems to breathe and move on its own, the merchandise on display stirring visitors to take on a fast, sporty lifestyle. The walls and ceiling undulate, shoes seem to flock like birds in flight.

Opened in September last year, it is the first of Fila's private retail boutiques in the United States.

Italian heritage meets art

Having grown up in Italy surrounded by Fila, he drew inspiration from his fondness and appreciation for the brand.

Managing director of retail Sheryl Bloom said they wanted their customers to achieve personal fulfillment through the pursuit of sport in a deeply personal and individual way.

The new Manila branch will bring this famous Fila heritage to the country.

Meanwhile, Fila is offering discounts of up to 30 percent on shoes. The promo is available in all Fila boutiques and department stores until April 30.



FILA I Sport Life advertising manager Ana Bitong and vice president and managing director Cris Albert with Fila models during the Madison store opening

Exercise may ease menopause symptoms

Part 2

A SURVEY ASKED WOMEN to rate their worst menopausal symptoms.

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How can Colorectal Cancer be prevented?

Although there are no foolproof measures yet that can really prevent the development of colorectal cancer (CRC) for both the general and high-risk population, it is noteworthy to mention that certain factors may play a significant role in colorectal cancer. For instance, some evidence exists that some anti-inflammatory medications, like aspirin, sulindac, and celecoxib can lower the risk for CRC and investigations are underway if indeed these agents may someday be used as chemopreventive agents against CRC. Hormone replacement therapy among women has also been shown by some to reduce CRC risk. Among dietary supplements, calcium and folic acid supplementation have shown similar benefits; however, antioxidants, like Vitamin C and E, despite being popular, have not shown any evidence to have any promising activity against CRC. In conclusion, CRC, just like any other malignancy, is a complex disease and the possibility of cure and prevention depends largely on good and early doctor-patient communication. Thus, adequate screening and surveillance are highly recommended for all average, non-high risk individuals above 50 years of age, and especially for those in the high-risk category, such as those who pass blood in their stools and those who have other signs and symptoms that may herald CRC.

Take Charge Doc!

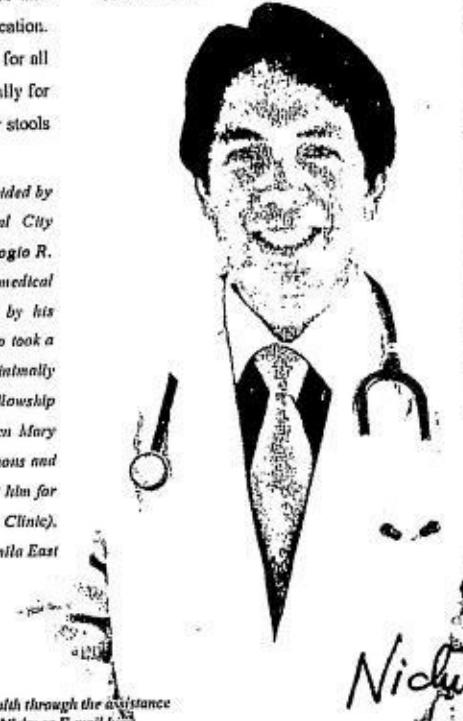


This week's answer to our favorite question was provided by our medical service provider from The Medical City (MEDICard Satellite Clinic) in Paranaque City. Dr. Eulogio R. Cox specializes in General Surgery. He obtained his medical degree from UERL in 1990 and followed by his specialization training for General Surgery at The Medical City. He also took a course on Intermediate Laparoscopic Surgery at Leeds Institute for Minimally Invasive Therapy (LIMIT) at University of Leeds, U.K. in 2003 and a fellowship training for Colorectal Surgery at the University of Hong Kong Queen Mary Hospital in 2004. Dr. Cox is a fellow of the Philippine College of Surgeons and Philippine Society of General Surgeons. MEDICard members may visit him for consultation services at The Medical City (MEDICard Satellite Clinic), Wednesdays 1pm-5pm and Fridays 9:00am to 12:00 noon and at the Manila East Medical Center, Mondays 4pm-6pm and Fridays 4pm to 6pm.

You may now reach MEDICard at its NEW TRUNKLINE NUMBER 88-4-9999

MEDICard's Medical Director, Dr. Nicky Montoya answers questions on health through the assistance and expertise of MEDICard's network of accredited specialists. Write to Dr. Nicky or E-mail him at inquiry@medicardph.com for your inquiries on health matters.

MEDICard PHILIPPINES, INC.: 9th Floor Seaparano Building H V de Leon Street, Salcedo Village, Makati City 1227
Trunkline: 88-4-9999 Fax No.: 091-5720-810-3855 Text: Key in MEDICARD and send to 2344 (Globe & Touch Mobile) or 4627 (Smart & Talk N' Text) E-mail: inquiry@medicardph.com Website: www.medicardph.com



TO UNDERSTAND WHAT ERASES your age, you have to know what makes you age.

It is said aging today is not like the way it was for our parents. Health consciousness then was not very high. Our mothers and fathers may have undergone this typical transition:

- an extra 10-15 pounds at 30
- wrinkles at 35-40
- dry skin/skin problems at 40
- joint pains at 45
- high cholesterol/hypertension at 50
- heart disease/cancer at 70
- osteoporosis/arthritis at 60

Knowing better

We don't need to go through this. And we should not. Because we know better. We know that:

- a low-fat diet can control weight gain
- avoiding the sun and using sunscreens can delay/prevent wrinkles
- fruits containing alpha-hydroxy acids can prevent dry, blotchy skin and age spots
- vegetables are loaded with antioxidants that the immune system depends on for strength
- exercise and resistance training prevent muscle and bone loss over the years
- meditation and relaxation can delay aging

In short, the age makers are the opposite of what we should know by now and which our parents did not know.

Designed to last

Our body is a near-perfect machine if

INSIDE OUT

Cory Quirino

we learn to take care of it. "The human body is designed to last 110 years," according to Ben Douglas, Ph.D., professor of anatomy at University of Mississippi Medical Center and author of "Ageless: Living Younger Longer."

So, beginning today, tell yourself you are only as old as you think or as young as you believe yourself to be. Stop telling yourself the following:

"I'm getting old," "It's old age," "I will die soon," "I'm dying," "I'm losing my memory," "I'm losing my mind," "I will die one day, so... (let me do unhealthy things.)"

So what... if

Our bodies experience crow's feet, less energy/power/drive, less lean mass, loss of hormones, stiffness, sluggishness, memory lapses, weak eyesight, impaired hearing, less sensitivity in taste buds, graying hair or hair thinning/loss. Despite how you feel or what you see in others, aging can be delayed. It does not have to happen too soon, too fast.

Battle plan

If you want to maintain your youthful look well into the 70s, begin now. Develop a plan to fight off the slow encroachment of age. You can:

- see your doctor
- visit a nutritionist, design an eating plan that is balanced
- work out an exercise program
- take adequate vitamin/mineral and antioxidant supplementation
- adopt a social and active lifestyle, one that puts you in touch with people and life
- walk more in the moonlight than sunlight
- avoid smoking and excessive drinking
- maintain cleanliness
- avoid medicine overload, try more natural approaches to your health
- stay calm, remove the anger from your heart
- keep learning something new, this keeps both brain and mind exercised
- look on the bright side of life
- count your blessings

Anti-aging beverages

Beta-carotene is best known for its immune-enhancing properties. Take it in its natural form.

Juice two peeled carrots and drink up every other day. In between, juice buko meat in its water.

There is a saying: In their youth, people abuse their health to run after wealth. In their old age, they use their wealth to run after their health.

It doesn't have to end this way. Begin a new beginning today.

Love and light!

Health and Beauty with Cory Q., April 8, Ayala Alabang Village. Call 8070501.

Chinese foot massage now available

BODY TUNE, THE ORIGINAL SPA-IN-a-mall, now offers the popular Xiamen foot massage at its newest branch at SM Valenzuela.

The unique Chinese treatment reportedly helps improve blood circulation, relieving rheumatism, athlete's foot, influenza and the like; improve the body's metabolism; relieves insomnia and fatigue; strengthens the body's different organs, such as the heart, liver and kidney; relieves pain caused by diabetes, headaches, gastritis, neurasthenia, high blood pressure, stiff neck, leg cramps, back pains and the like;

and relieves stress.

The Xiamen foot massage comes with an herbal foot soak, a massage of the feet's different reflexology points, and a foot scrub.

Body Tune offers a full menu of spa services, though it specializes in the traditional Thai massage that does not use oil. Other massages offered are Sparoma aromatherapy, volcanic stone, Swedish, shiatsu, holistic (a combination of Swedish and shiatsu), twin, cellulite, Thai foot, hand, chair, and chair with scalp. It will soon offer Balinese foot massage.

Also available are facial treatments like the aroma facial massage, facial scrub with mask and nonsurgical facelift. It also offers hand and foot care services like spa manicure, spa pedicure, foot spa, manicure and pedicure.

Body Tune also has branches at SM City North Edsa, SM City Bicutan, SM City Bacoor, SM City Baguio, SM City Dasmarinas, SM City Batangas, SM South Mall, SM City Pampanga, SM City Marilao, SM City Fairview, SM City Cebu, SM Mall of Asia, SM Megamall, Market! Market!, and Batangas City.

OPENS TOMORROW
MTRCB RATING ► R-18 Strictly for ADULTS
No one below 18 yrs. old may be admitted

SEDUCTION

MANIPULATION

PERVERSION

Everything begins in the mind.

SHARON STONE

BASIC INSTINCT

MOVE OVER ZORRO... HERE COMES THE NEW HEROES OF THE POOR AND OPPRESSED

SAIMA HAYEK

PENÉLOPE CRUZ

FEAR NO MAN

BANDIDAS



WAR on Worms received the Anvil Award of Excellence for Program in Support of Advocacy. In photo are Joel D. Lacson, chair, 41st Anvil Awards Committee; Ma. Amylyn C. Sison de Quiros, president, Public Relations Society of the Philippines; Jondy Syjoco of Janssen Pharmaceutica, Amor Maclang of Geiser Maclang, Rezza Custodio of Janssen Pharmaceutica, Justice Amado D. Valdez, chair, Board of Jurors; Eduardo Alcaraz, 41st Anvil Awards Committee.

'War' gets award of excellence

WAR ON WORMS received the Anvil Award of Excellence for Program in Support of Advocacy.

Jointly developed by Janssen Pharmaceutica, makers of Mebendazole Antiox, and the National Institute of Health, the award was presented during the 41st Anvil Awards.

War on Worms, the first National Conference on Intestinal Helminth Control, addressed the widespread problem of parasitic infection that has reached epidemic proportions. Some 7 out of 10 public preschoolers in the country are infected.

Health advocates from both public and private sectors attending the meeting. Senate Committee on Health chair Pia Cayetano gave the keynote address.